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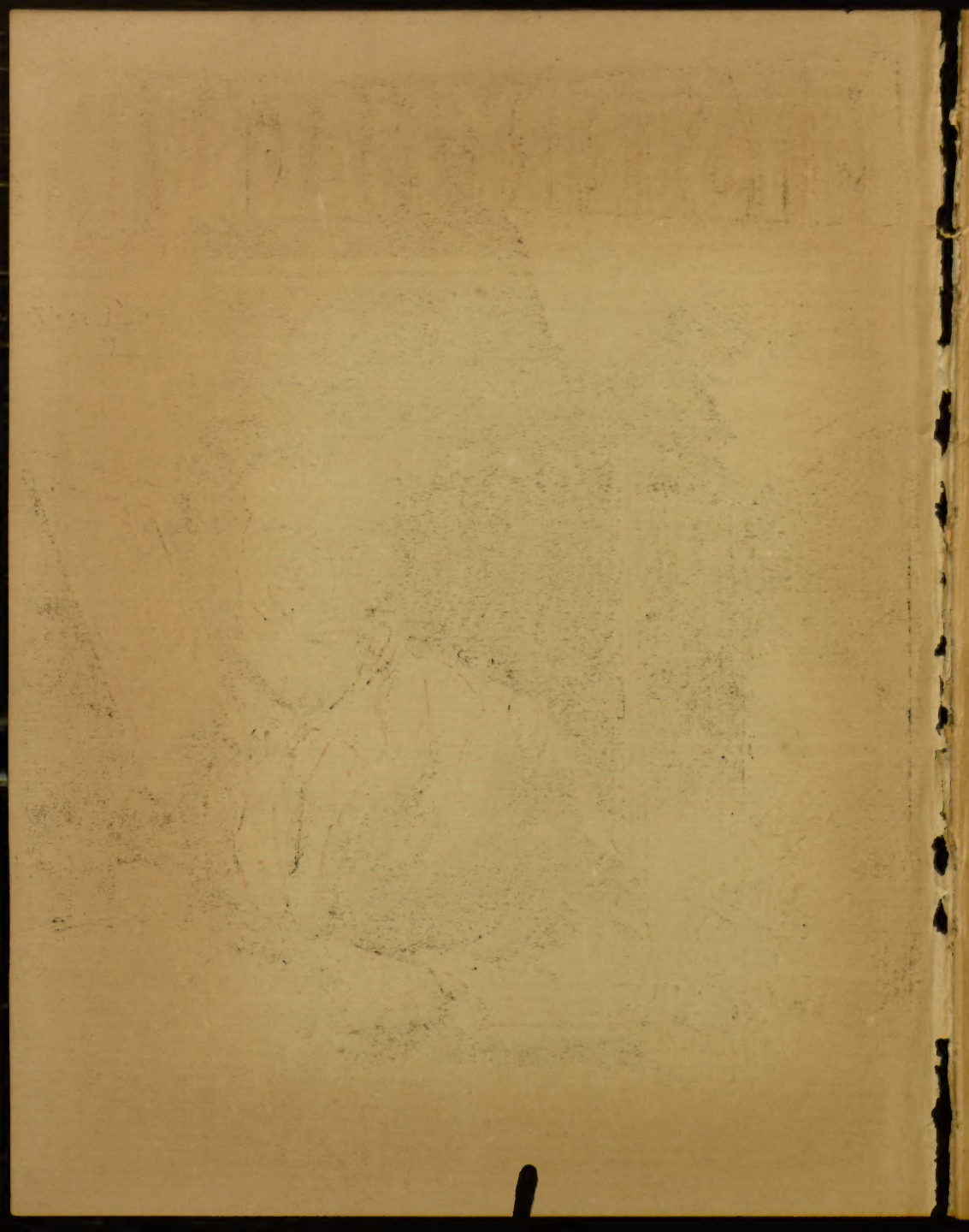
Feature Story

THE MYSTIC EMBLEM

By MARIE COOLIDGE RASK



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MYSTERY MAGAZINE

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The Mystic Emblem

AN EXCITING STORY OF LOST MEMORY

By MARIE COOLIDGE RASK

CHAPTER ONE

THE LETTER

"THEN you think the message should be sent to-day."

"I do, most decidedly."

"And you want me to——"

"Act at once. It is not necessary that you communicate with me again; at least, not until there are results. I am not interested in the manner of its accomplishment."

The words were spoken in low tones, beyond possibility of reaching the ears of the switchboard operator on the opposite side of the dingy office reception-room. For half an hour the two men had been sitting there, barring several trivial interruptions, in earnest conversation. One, blue-eyed, fair-haired and stocky, now rose to his feet.

"You are sure about that Washington trip?" he inquired.

"Certainly," was the reply; "you have nothing to fear on that score. The date of the appointment can be made sufficiently far ahead."

The blond man reached for his hat. "I guess we'll be able to put it through," he remarked thoughtfully. "Anna is clever; if any one can land the housekeeper job, she will."

The dark brows of the man facing him drew together in a slight frown. "Suit yourself as to details," he said, rising; "but don't let there be any mistake. Government agents are pretty active just now."

The stocky man made a gesture of impatience. "I am not one to make mistakes," he observed tartly; then, turning toward the door, "How do I get down out of here?"

"Turn to your left at the end of the hall," replied the other; then added as an afterthought, "If you wait a minute until I see what this inventor wants"—indicating a newcomer who seemed to be in quest of some one—"I'll ride down in the elevator with you."

While this scene was being enacted in the reception-room another conversation was taking place in a business-office several floors higher up in the same building. Timothy Clark had spent a pleasant half-hour talking over business affairs and matters of national interest with his old friend Grant Sherwood. Now he leaned back in his chair and puffed complacently at his cigar in anticipation of Sherwood's words of approval. The latter spoke with conviction.

"It is a great idea."

"No doubt about it."

"What will be the cost of production?"

"We haven't taken that up yet. Whatever it is, it will be small in proportion to the value of the discovery. In my opinion, its possibilities are limitless." Mechanically Clark reached for the telephone. "Excuse me," he remarked apologetically, "but I told some one to call me up at this hour. We are terribly rushed just now."

"So I understand."

During the brief interruption Grant Sherwood had opportunity to glance about the office. It was dusty and unpretentious, but it had a wonderful outlook over the city and shipping district. An auburn-haired stenographer in a transparent waist and abbreviated skirt chewed gum with a rapidity of action that kept time to the speed of her fingers as they danced over the typewriter-keys. A tall, bespectacled young man, who spoke with an almost imperceptible accent, stood by a high safe, sorting papers and occasionally exchanging remarks with a thin-faced youth, whose perpetual occupation seemed to be that of searching for letters in a filing-cabinet. Near one of the many windows a plump, matronly woman sat before a table on which were arranged three large wire baskets heaped high with mail matter, which she was reading, assorting and making notations upon. Seated in a swivel-chair at the roll-top desk at Sherwood's side was Clark, the man he had called to see, keen-visaged, clear-eyed, plainly dressed, undoubtedly Celtic of origin, and, for the time being, vested with authority as consulting expert in mechanical devices pertaining in national defense. Clark's conversation over the telephone was brief. Swinging around in his chair, he again faced his visitor.

"I'd like to have you meet Musine," he observed. "I'm putting these matters all in his hands just now. He was sent over from the Capitol especially to assist me. A reserve officer—very reliable. Has Lieutenant Musine come in yet this morning, Miss Gottschalk?" he asked, turning to the woman at the table.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Clark," she replied, glancing up from a crude sketch of a nautical device which she had been studying with interest; "Lieutenant Musine is down-stairs, seeing an inventor."

Clark leaned forward and took up several blue-prints from the table. "Then we may expect him up presently," he remarked, carefully unrolling the papers and spreading them out on the leaf of his desk. "In the meantime Mr. Sherwood and I can look over these plans. There was a letter with them, wasn't there, Miss Gottschalk?"

Miss Gottschalk said there was.

"Get it for me, will you, please?"

The woman looked surprised. "Why, I think it is right there, pinned to the specifications, isn't it, Mr. Clark?" she queried. "It should be there; Lieutenant Musine said he would give it his personal attention."

Clark fumbled among the papers on his desk. "It is not here," he declared. "Musine must have put it away somewhere. I wish he would hurry. What is the matter with that inventor down-stairs? Seems to me Musine is always down-stairs seeing an inventor."

Before Miss Gottschalk could reply the bespectacled young man had crossed the room to Clark's side. "Shall I go for Lieutenant Musine, sir?" he asked in a low, unobtrusive tone. A deep flush dyed his face; his eyes were downcast, giving the impression of extreme diffidence or conscious duplicity. Until he spoke, it had not been apparent that he was aware of the conversation in which the two older men had been engaged.

"No, you needn't go down," Clark replied, his eyes focused on the drawings before him, his finger following one of the tracings. "Lieutenant Musine will come up doubtless as soon as he can. Do you happen to remember what Mr. Lester said in his letter about the final experiments he is making?"

"I think he stated that the invention would be useless without the final formula and that he considered it unwise to submit that at the present time. He proposed meeting you in Washington, at your convenience, and personally demonstrating the possibilities of the explosive."

"You see," Clark explained to Sherwood, as the young man finished, "Lester is eccentric, like all geniuses, and very suspicious; doesn't like to trust anything out of his sight. Now, this invention of his may revolutionize modern warfare. It is a marvelous thing. I don't believe he himself realized it when he sent in these drawings. He knows me and has confidence in my opinion, but I declare I've been so busy lately I've not had time to give this matter the attention it deserved. I've had to turn it all over to Musine."

Grant Sherwood glanced at his watch. "I'll not be able to wait any longer," he observed, rising; "I've several appointments to keep. I'd like to hear more about that scheme of Lester's. When is he going to be in town? Did you know that we were charter members of the same lodge? Took up the work together when we were just out of college. I've lost sight of him of late, but I was present at Kismet Temple the night they gave him his Past-Master's jewel. Did he ever show you the emblem?"

Clark crossed to the elevator and pressed the button. "Possibly," he replied; "I don't remember. It seems to me I heard something about it at the time. The jewel has rather an unusual setting, hasn't it? I'm so busy I don't give much time to lodge affairs. No, I don't know when Lester will be in town. He is out in the country just now, at his hermitage in the mountains, remote from every one and everything. He does all his experimenting up there; has some kind of a laboratory; says it is the only place where he can concentrate his mind and be free from interruptions. Besides that," Clark continued, speaking in a more confidential tone as the little dummy-lift climbed slowly upward toward the floor on which they waited, "Lester thinks he is safer there from observation. It is his ambition to make his work a national benefit. I think it would kill him if anything of his ever reached enemy hands."

The iron door of the elevator opened and Sherwood stepped inside. "Glad to have seen you," he said, nodding to Clark; "I'll stop in again on my return from the West."

"Do," called Clark, as the elevator commenced to descend. "If you don't find me here look me up in Washington."

Five minutes later the elevator-door again slid open. This time Lieutenant Musine stepped into the room. In his conversation with the blond, stocky man he had been dictatorial, even impatient; now he appeared calm, tranquil, impassive. He was a tall, slender man of distinctly professional type; his face was oval and his dark eyes, long, black lashes, heavy brows and close-cut, pointed beard only served to accentuate the ivory pallor of his complexion; his full, red lips and waving, dark hair suggested Semetic origin, though he might have passed as a Spaniard or South American. Now, as at all times, his face was inscrutable. Clark glanced up from the letters he was signing.

"My! That inventor was a stayer," he remarked dryly.

"Inventor!" repeated Musine in a tone of abstraction. "Oh, it wasn't the same one all this time. I've seen several. Why, did you want me?"

"There was some one here I wanted to have you meet," Clark replied. "He's gone now; couldn't wait."

"Sorry," answered Musine, still with an air of preoccupation. "I wish you had sent down for me."

Crossing to the desk of the auburn-haired typist, he paused by the window and for a moment stood gazing out over the harbor. Several large ships were passing. Apparently he did not see them. Miss Gottschalk, when she was not busy with the hundreds of letters which the be-

spectacled secretary continually placed before her for sorting, was wont to wonder if Lieutenant Musine was ever conscious of the panorama spread out before the high office windows. Another matter she had never been able to decide was whether to classify the reserve officer as handsome, distinguished, or just peculiar in appearance. Now the expression of his unfathomable eyes seemed more than usually concentrated upon space.

"Take this letter, please," he said, suddenly turning to the auburn-haired girl by his side. Hardly waiting for her to get a pencil and writing-pad, he commenced to dictate, speaking in a low, almost inaudible tone:

"MR. GERALD LESTER, The Hermitage, Mount Forest, Pa.

"DEAR SIR—Owing to demand of government affairs, Mr. Clark has found it impossible to personally answer the many letters coming to him daily and has entrusted that duty to me. The blue-prints and specifications you mailed have been received. Your invention, as outlined, won Mr. Clark's instant approval. He expects to be in Washington the latter part of this month. At that time he will be glad to witness a demonstration of the explosive device, according to the secret formula mentioned in your letter. He has given instructions for an appointment to be made. If you will get in communication with his secretary at the New Willard about the 25th instant, he will tell you when Mr. Clark can see you.

"Very respectfully yours,

"..... ....."

While Lieutenant Musine was giving this dictation Clark had risen from his desk at the end of the room and prepared to leave.

"I'm going to lunch now," he observed to the young man with the spectacles; then, noticing Musine, he seemed to recollect something. "By the way, Musine," he inquired, "have you that letter from Mr. Lester? I want to answer it to-day."

The reserve officer came slowly toward his superior. "It has already been attended to," he replied with calm imperturbability; "I am sorry. I did not know you purposed answering it yourself."

Clark was plainly annoyed. "But Mr. Lester wanted an appointment, didn't he?" he inquired. "What did you tell him?"

"That you would see him in Washington the latter part of the month."

"But I am leaving for Washington to-morrow."

Clark's irritation did not in the slightest degree mar Musine's studied composure. "I thought you would be too busy before that time," he replied. "I understood you had to appear before a good many committees. Rudolph put down the appointment for the twenty-ninth."

Clark's usually cheerful, rubicund countenance was grave. "It may be all right," he said thoughtfully. "I dare say I shall be pretty well occupied. That invention is a big thing, though; I don't quite like to keep Mr. Lester waiting."

"The date can be changed."

Clark shook his head negatively. "No," he replied; "you needn't do that. If Rudolph has the appointment scheduled for the twenty-ninth, let it go at that."

The secretary's eyes were more than ever downcast. "There was too much to be done before that date," he volunteered respectfully. "It was the best I could do."

As the elevator-door closed behind Clark, Musine took the finished letter from the hands of the rapid typist and affixed his signature. "Stop in at the post-office and mail this while you are out, Rudolph," he remarked, sealing the letter in its envelope and handing it to the bespectacled young man now ready for the street; "Willie can attend to the other mail."

As he received the letter the downcast lids of the secretary raised for the barest fraction of a second and the pale blue eyes encountered the dreamy, far-off gaze of the reserve officer.

"Yes, sir; I understand," he said.

CHAPTER TWO

AN UNEXPECTED TIP

THE stocky man to whom Lieutenant Musine had given so much of his morning's time did quick thinking and acting after he had left the tall office building behind him. First he went to a Western Union Telegraph office and sent a message; then he dropped into a railroad office and procured a time-table. His next stop was at a cigar-store, where he entered a telephone-booth. After some ten minutes he reappeared, hurried down the subway steps at Fulton street and boarded an up-town express. His entrance was noted by two men, one of whom made room for him by his side.

"Excuse me," remarked the younger of the two, an alert, smooth-faced man under thirty years, as he picked up a railroad folder from the floor and extended it toward the newcomer, "you dropped this coming in."

The man he addressed put his hand hastily into his coat-pocket. It was empty. With a word of thanks he accepted the folder and studied it carefully until near Fourteenth street. There he changed to a local; the other men changed also. At Twenty-eighth street the stocky man got out. The others rode on to the next station, crossed the street and entered the Hotel Vanderbilt.

"That was a Jersey Central time-table, wasn't it?" asked the older man, after the two had seated themselves at a table in the grillroom.

Before his companion could reply a third man approached and greeted the speaker cordially. "How do you do, Sherwood?" he exclaimed. "You're just the man I wanted to see. A matter was brought to my attention a day or so ago that I think you will be interested in. It isn't in my line."

Sherwood laughed. "I thought everything came in the line of newspaper people," he observed. "You criticize our methods enough. You ought to be able to demonstrate your own theories and show us how the work should be done. That was an awful roast you gave us in Tuesday's paper."

The newcomer attempted to say something in defense of the publication he represented, but was interrupted. "Sit down and have lunch with us," Sherwood told him. "Meet Mr. Ridley"—indicating his companion, who extended his hand in greeting—"and pour forth your information. If it is anything worth while we may decide to let you live a little longer before we have you shot for treason."

"Thanks."

Having accepted the invitation to lunch and longevity the literary man, whom Sherwood addressed as Jules, at once launched into the subject which he had in mind.

"Here's the situation," he commenced, after the waiter had taken his order and disappeared; "there is a house over in Brooklyn that ought to be investigated." He gave the street and number. "The actions of its inmates are open to suspicion."

"So!" exclaimed Sherwood with mock seriousness. "I'm sure the government never suspected it. How did you find it out?"

"Not by any cut-and-dried methods," answered Jules somewhat testily. He did not enjoy the joking. "This is serious," he declared; "at least, so far as I am concerned. Of course, I haven't investigated the matter; that's up to you. Perhaps there is nothing in it. I suppose you will say it is merely the result of hysteria, hallucinations, or some old lady's nightmare; but," he paused significantly, "it has all the elements of a good story. In my opinion, however, it ought to be investigated by the proper authorities, not by a newspaper."

"Ah! So you do consider us proper authorities after all. All right; go ahead, we'll listen."

"Best authorities I know, even if I don't always approve of your methods," declared the critic. "Now the facts are these: The Misses Wiley are two very estimable women a little past middle age. They live in an old-fashioned

brownstone-front house in a district that years ago was fashionable, but now gone to decay. They are practically the only residents in the locality who continue to live in the same house occupied by their ancestors for several generations. Naturally they are somewhat of the old school—prim, precise, punctiliously correct—not in the least women whose opinions are to be lightly regarded. They have a nephew, by the way, in the United States service. He is a captain stationed somewhere in France, and he is engaged to be married to Vivian Lester, daughter of Gerald Lester, the inventor. But that's not to the point. It is merely to let you know that the source of my information is not questionable.

"Now the elder Miss Wiley has seen and heard things at the house next-door which convince her that it is a hotbed of disloyalty and intrigue. There are mysterious goings and comings; there are misfit characters, which do not harmonize either with the sordid surroundings nor with the domestic type of woman who apparently is the head of the house. The prevailing language is German, and the American flag is conspicuous by its absence."

Sherwood and Ridley had been listening with apparent interest. As the speaker paused, they exchanged glances.

"Is there nothing more tangible?" asked Sherwood.

"No; I am sorry to say there is not," answered Jules. "There are a number of minor details, but nothing incriminating. Miss Wiley thought that perhaps if the house was kept under surveillance it might result in establishing the identity of some of the people connected with it. I suggest that you call and see Miss Wiley; she can tell you more than I can."

"That house——" Ridley commenced, but paused at a look from Sherwood. "We're pretty busy," he added lamely.

"But of course we'll make a note of what you have told us and have the matter investigated," interrupted Sherwood. "It may not be necessary to trouble Miss Wiley. We have other means of information. It is well to know, however, that we can rely upon her to keep us informed should anything occur to strengthen her surmises."

"Oh, certainly," agreed Jules; "both the Miss Wileys will gladly co-operate in every way possible."

The conversation drifted to other topics. It was not until Jules had left them that Sherwood and Ridley referred again to the mysterious Brooklyn house.

"Lord deliver us from the woman," groaned Sherwood.

"And the newspapers," supplemented Ridley. "Do they think that because we don't tell everything we know that we don't know anything? How long since we've had that house on our lists?"

Sherwood shrugged his shoulders. "We can't waste time discussing that now," he said rather impatiently; "this wireless case is too important. If you want to make a record for yourself, now is your chance." Then he added with apparent irrelevance: "I wonder what Miller was doing with a Jersey Central time-table."

"Perhaps I can let you know by the end of the week," replied Ridley appreciately. "It was the Pennsylvania division; our paths may cross."

Sherwood sat for a moment absorbed in thought. "Better telephone down to Brown to send some one up to Twenty-eighth street," he observed at length; "it won't be amiss to keep an eye on Miller's movements. He's clever and I'm not at all sure that he doesn't understand radio-work. Brown knows where he lives; he's got the address on file."

Ridley nodded; pushing back his chair, he rose from the table. "I'll run across the street and telephone from a booth while you pay the bill," he said, taking his hat from the waiter. "If I didn't have those errands to do over on Sixth avenue I'd look after him myself; but I want to get off to-night, if possible."

About five o'clock that afternoon a young woman alighted from a taxicab in front of a house on East Twenty-eighth street and ran hastily up the steps. Her coming had evidently been expected, for the door opened before she had time to ring. The passer-by who paused at the foot of the steps to light a cigar had only opportunity to observe that she was unmistakably blonde, of modish figure, and, when she turned to speak to the chauffeur, that one of her front teeth was crowned with gold.

"Auf Wiedersehen," murmured the observer as the girl entered the house. "I wonder if she speaks English?" Then he crossed the street and rented for immediate occupancy the second floor frontroom of the house opposite.

"Might as well be comfortable," he mused when the housekeeper had descended the stairs. Drawing an easy-chair to the window he turned out the light, raised the shade, seated himself and waited.

CHAPTER THREE

A SHADOW ELUDED

"AM I in time?"

The blonde young woman spoke in German. The stocky man, to whom the question was addressed, scrutinized her closely. There was a marked resemblance between the two.

"Did you think you were going to the Ritz-Carlton?" he queried in reply. "Why did you wear that dress, Anna? Didn't I tell you to prepare for the country? You'll need work dresses and aprons."

The girl laughed. "My dear brother!" she exclaimed; "if I did not know you to be clever I'd call you stupid. Didn't you tell me to send my luggage right to the ferry? It's gone; I haven't forgotten anything. When you telephoned I was dressed to go to the matinée; there wasn't time to change. Anyway, you say the man is living alone. He will be all the more apt to engage me if I look attractive. Men detest ugly women, you know that, don't you?"

Ernst Miller smiled. It was the first time he had smiled that day. In spite of his criticism he had not the slightest doubt of his sister's judgment in all matters which concerned herself. Heretofore her fondness for dainty attire and modish clothes had always stood her in good stead. Now, even though the undertaking promised a departure from the usual line, he felt compelled to admit the soundness of her logic.

After an hour or more the two left the house and dined together at a Hungarian restaurant. The new lodger in the house across the way dined at the same place. It was during the latter's absence from the comfortable chair in the front window that a boy called at Miller's address and departed with that gentleman's traveling-bags. Several times during the progress of the meal Anna glanced sharply in the direction of the stranger. Vaguely he reminded her of some one; suddenly she remembered.

"Ernst," she whispered in a low tone, addressing her brother, "don't look now, but later notice the man sitting at the table in the corner. He stopped in front of the house to light a cigar just as I was paying the chauffeur. I thought at the time that it was not altogether accidental. I've noticed him all during dinner; he's watching us."

Miller waited a moment; then, in an effort to attract the attention of a waiter, let his gaze wander toward the young man Anna had referred to.

"I guess you are right," Ernst observed to his sister, after the waiter had come and gone again; "I've seen that fellow before. I think I know where he comes from. He doesn't know you, though. I'll call a cab, say good-by, and you can drive to the ferry alone. I'll go back to the house. It's early; there is plenty of time. When I'm sure he has laid off for the night I'll come down. If I should happen to miss the train, don't wait for me."

"Do you suppose he suspects——" commenced Anna, when Ernst interrupted.

"No," he answered angrily; "they've got me spotted as an alien enemy. They haven't fastened anything on me and they're trying to get something, that's all. Fools! I'll show them a thing or two."

When the cab which he had ordered pulled up in front of the restaurant Ernst handed his sister in with marked solicitude. "So glad to have had the pleasure," he re-

marked in response to her expressions of appreciation. "It was unexpected, I assure you. Give my regards to Mrs. Myers and tell her I'll try to call Sunday afternoon." Placing a bill in the chauffeur's hand, he directed him to drive to an address in The Bronx.

It was with a sense of satisfaction that Miller noticed the address had been overheard by the solitary diner, who had also left the restaurant, and, during the little by-play, had been purchasing a paper from a newsboy close at hand.

When at some distance from the restaurant, Anna countermanded the directions given to the chauffeur and instructed him to drive to the ferry. By the time her brother rejoined her she had already crossed the river and boarded a train.

"How did you manage?" she inquired eagerly, as he bustled into the car.

"Rear entrance," he explained nonchalantly; "cut across the intervening back-yard to Schultz's saloon on the corner and came out on Fourth avenue. Got my bags?"

"Yes; the boy was waiting."

At an early hour the following morning Müller and his sister arrived at the little village of Mount Forest. The telegraph operator, who was also the ticket and station agent, was not averse to conversation. Mount Forest, he agreed, was a most desirable location for any one seeking a healthful retreat for overwrought nerves, but doubted the possibility of the newcomers securing employment together at any one of the many wealthy homes in that section.

"You see," he averred, "most of the folks up here keep the same servants year after year. If they let them go they have an awful time filling their places. It is lonely, you know; all the country estates are so remote from one another and the village doesn't amount to much. It isn't every one that wants to come so far from the city." A sudden thought seized him.

"Say," he exclaimed, "I'll tell you where there might be a chance. By rights I shouldn't mention it; I'm not supposed to, but in this case I shouldn't be surprised if the old fellow would be pretty thankful to have you drop in on him." Ernst and Anna exchanged quick glances of satisfaction.

"There's an inventor up here," continued the operator; "you may have heard of him, Gerald Lester, the man who really put Mount Forest on the map. He has a summer place and a kind of combination laboratory and experimental shop way up in the mountains. The Hermitage, he calls it; I guess that's it, all right. It stands off quite a bit from the main road and is about a mile this side of the junction where the Lehigh Valley road cuts through. It's completely hidden from everything. Mr. Lester has been up there off and on for months, inventing something for the government, I guess. He used to have a cook—a woman who lived around here; but she died, and since then his man has been keeping house for him. The fellow is an Englishman; can do anything. But last night he got a message. I took it up to him myself, and he's starting for England to-day. Somebody's died and he is next of kin. The message came from a New York lawyer, who said he was going to Montreal and would meet Richards there. That's why he has got to get off by the first train. When I came away last night Mr. Lester was offering the man every inducement to remain. He said his experiments would be delayed. Finally Mr. Lester had me send a message to his daughter in New York, telling her to go to an employment agency and find some one to take his place. Now, I don't know whether she's got any one yet or not. You might go up there and see Mr. Lester. You can say I sent you, if you want to."

Nothing could have pleased the conspirators better. With profuse thanks the two lost no time in setting forth for the inventor's house. The operator gave minute directions.

"Wasn't he easy?" laughed Anna, when they were well out of hearing. "Did you know about him before you sent the message?"

A sardonic smile flickered about Ernst's mouth. "No," he answered; "but these blame Yankees fall for anything, trust everybody, tell all they know. If he hadn't directed us up there somebody else would. Country places are all alike."

Anna was silent for a moment. "If this thing goes through you'll probably get a decoration, won't you, Ernst?" she asked at length.

"Not if Musine can beat me to it," replied Miller sharply. "I don't want to discuss such things now; it's dangerous."

For half an hour they trudged in silence up the picturesque, winding road, bordered on either side by dense woodland, crumbling stone walls and trailing ivy. Then they came to a more carefully kept driveway, which branched off from the main road and extended some distance until it terminated apparently in a labyrinth of shrubbery. Completely hidden behind this shrubbery was the house they sought.

The Hermitage was a low, rambling, story-and-a-half structure, part cottage, part workshop, with a wing, which apparently comprised the servants' quarters. A broad porch extended across the front of the house, terminating at one end against the sloping hillside. It was artistic and picturesque, surrounded by wild, natural scenery, unmarred by landscape gardens; but its loneliness and isolation in the forest stillness was oppressive even in the broad light of day.

"Fine place for a murder," soliloquized Miller.

"He'll engage us," whispered Anna, as they drew near. "The servant problem isn't so easily solved in places like this. It's a case of 'Oh, good Lord, any one.'"

CHAPTER FOUR

AT THE HERMITAGE

As had been surmised, the hermit inventor was not averse to interviewing two well-recommended persons qualified to take charge of his simple menage in place of the departing Richards and the recently deceased cook.

Gerald Lester was only a little past middle age, but his nervous energy and studious habits, combined with a passion for work without regard to the limits of physical endurance, had produced the ageing effect of years. Naturally tall and slender, he was inclined to stoop. His thin, almost cadaverous, face was deeply lined. Bright, restless eyes looked forth, keen and suspicious, from under heavy, overhanging brows. In speech and manner he was inclined to be irritable, and his mental disquietude over trivial annoyances bordered on a fussiness almost feminine.

Such was his mood on the morning in question. The knowledge that he was about to lose Richards had given him a sleepless night. Not that he was interested in Richards as a personality, but that Richards as an indispensable piece of mechanism was about to put the smoothly running domestic machinery completely out of gear by his absence, thereby disturbing inventive concentration and otherwise interfering with established routine. It was with evident relief, therefore, that the inventor listened to Ernest's straightforward story, backed by excellent references and a physician's letter urging that the best cure for his sister's over-wrought nerves, resultant from the shock of her fiancé's death, was a quiet, simple life in the country, far from all excitement and confusion.

"But I have got to have some one immediately," Lester protested. "My man is leaving this morning. I have wired my daughter to send somebody to-day."

The tone in which Miller replied was as soothing as that of a mother quieting a querulous child. "He and his sister had hardly expected," he said, "to find so congenial a place immediately available. Their trip to Mount Forest had been made, primarily, just to look over the ground. It was a remarkable coincidence that the opera-

tor had chanced to mention Mr. Lester's misfortune in losing his man. Under the circumstances, as a matter of convenience to him, they would be willing to readjust their plans and assume the duties of caretakers at once."

"You mean you would stay now? You wouldn't have to go back for anything?" queried Lester eagerly, at the same time eyeing them with new interest.

"Just for our bags at Mount Forest station," Ernest replied. "With them we can manage to get along until I run up to New York some day, if that is possible?"

"Oh, certainly," Lester agreed; "that can be arranged in due season. We will have your bags sent up from Mount Forest. Richards can attend to that when he goes to the station. He must also send an explanatory message to my daughter. But he will have time before leaving to show you your rooms and instruct you in your duties."

Richards, now bustling about in a fever of impatience to be off, lost no time in complying with the last suggestion. The rooms to which he assigned the newcomers were located in the upper part of the wing. A private staircase led down to their dining-room, which opened into the kitchen.

"Where is Mr. Lester's dining-room?" asked Anna, with a natural interest in the housekeeping arrangements.

"Just the other side of the kitchen," answered Richards hastily. "The butler's pantry lies between." As the owner of the house was pacing to and fro on the broad veranda, Richards led his companions through the dining-room in question and into the library beyond.

"Mr. Lester does all his writing in here," he explained. "His laboratory is across the hall, on the other side of the house, with his bedroom adjoining, just under your room, Miss Anna. Your brother's room is directly over the laboratory. When Miss Vivian, Mr. Lester's daughter, is here she occupies the front room over the reception-hall. You will notice that upstairs the hall is not open the length of the house, as on the main floor, but is divided by heavy doors, so that your rooms are practically detached."

Anna replied that she had noticed the arrangement and considered it very desirable. "Where does Miss Lester stay when she is not here?" she asked. "Have they a town house?"

"They did have," answered Richards, "but following Mrs. Lester's death it was leased for a considerable length of time and the lease has not yet expired. Miss Vivian finished at Vassar only last year. When they are not at The Hermitage she and her father live at the Waldorf."

"Is that where she is now?"

"I believe so. She was there the last I knew."

During the days which followed, the tact and adeptness displayed by both Ernest and Anna in their new position was a source of much satisfaction to their employer. His daughter, however, did not share his enthusiasm.

To Vivian Lester the fact that her father, usually so cautious, had consented to place two strangers in charge of his house seemed in itself suspicious. What influence had they exerted, she wondered, to induce him to act so contrary to his custom? On former occasions his servants had never been engaged until their references had been looked up, and in most cases their characters vouched for by personal friends of the Lesters by whom the applicants had previously been employed. Moreover, upon receiving her father's message urging her to procure a substitute for Richards, she had, after considerable effort and inconvenience, succeeded in finding a desirable married couple, of the type liable to remain in faithful servitude for a period of years. To have her plans overthrown by the receipt of a second message informing her that caretakers were already installed was extremely annoying. That such a message should be followed by letters dilating upon the almost perfect qualities of those caretakers only added to her vague misgivings.

"Your paragons seem almost too good to be true," she wrote her father in reply. To her fiancé, Capt. Philip Wiley, "Somewhere in France," she expressed herself more fully.

"I am really worried," she wrote, "about father. He persists in staying at The Hermitage, and has lately acquired a bodyguard of such a pair of paragons that I shall not be surprised any day to hear that they have developed halos and wings, or handcuffs and prison raiment. When people of education and ability, so apparently beyond the servant class, voluntarily assume menial positions there usually exists some special reason for the camouflage. Within a few days I plan to walk in upon father quite unexpectedly and line up his retinue for an official inspection. (You see, I am becoming very military in my diction.) In the meantime, if anything happens, either for good or ill, in our family, I prophesy that father's 'heavenly twins' will be at the bottom of it. Things are too smooth to last. Either perfection must be reached—in which case the perfected ones will fly away—or disaster occur when the angels will fall and we—goodness knows where we'll be. But if you don't hear from me again within the usual time, you had better apply for leave and come home to look us up."

Though she little realized it, her words were destined to be fulfilled in more ways than one. Captain Wiley, when he read them, became suddenly conscious of a foreboding which he could not define. But that was weeks afterward. Letters to France are long in transit. To make matters worse, the captain, when he received the letter, was flat on his back in a surgical bed in a base hospital, doing his best to recover from wounds received when he led his men in a valiant dash "over the top."

At the time she wrote the letter, however, Vivian Lester was in one of her happiest moods. It was true, as she said, that she vaguely suspected ulterior motives on the part of the newcomers at The Hermitage, but she was not one to pass final judgment without personal knowledge. It was quite as much her wish to be absolutely fair as to allay intuitive fears that she resolved to join her father at their summer home. He would be pleased and surprised to see her, she reasoned. Therefore, she did not apprise him of her intention.

Meanwhile, at The Hermitage the paragons, as Vivian had termed them, gave no outward indication of falling from grace. Anna busied herself diligently with household affairs, never obtruding in the slightest degree, and Ernest, when not occupied as valet or in assisting his employer in the laboratory, was wont to spend a great deal of time out of doors. The inventor, had he been inclined, might well have marveled at the multitude of things which required repairs and various attentions throughout the extent of his wooded estate.

"I think it best to make a complete tour of the place at least once a day," Ernst explained, when Lester questioned him in reference to an unusually long absence. "This is the season for tramps. We have not had much rain for some time, and a campfire, started in the underbrush, would work havoc."

"Have you seen any tramps about?"

"Yes, sir. I met one to-day—a very suspicious acting fellow—and I took the precaution to warn him from the grounds. I casually mentioned that our dog was permitted to roam at large at night."

"But we haven't any dog."

"The tramp did not know that, sir."

Late that night a man, unmistakably a tramp, pushed his way through dense shrubbery and came upon the decrepit shell of what had once been a tiny frame structure, such as wealthy land owners erect for their children's playhouse. Evidently, the playhouse, as such, had been abandoned for years. It was overgrown with vines, and at some period had been partially demolished by a storm. Nevertheless, a slight clearing away of vines and underbrush about the door indicated that some one had found the seclusion of the place desirable and was in the habit of visiting it. Very cautiously the tramp approached. The door was not locked and swung open easily at his touch. For the barest instant a shaft of light swept about the plain interior and as quickly disap-

peared. What it revealed caused the observer to utter a low exclamation.

"I'd like to meet that dog that roams at large at night," he muttered to himself, as he crept softly away into the darkness.

CHAPTER FIVE

PREPARATIONS FOR A JOURNEY

THE following morning Ernst placed in Anna's hands a small packet of papers.

"These are for you," he told her. "Keep them with your belongings. When you have time, look them over."

"What are they?" she asked.

"General information to insure personal safety," he replied. "If anything ever happens to me, you will know what to do and where to go."

"Why, Ernst!" she exclaimed, in alarm. "You don't mean—"

He silenced her with a gesture. "I don't mean anything," he said, "but I believe in preparedness. If Germany had not been prepared, where would we have been to-day?"

"Sitting by our own firesides," she answered flippantly, "instead of ——". The sharp ringing of an electric bell over her head caused her to break off with a laugh. "Mr. Lester's bell!" she cried. "He wants you, Ernst. Better run. Now, don't you wish Germany hadn't been prepared?"

"I wish you could realize the seriousness of a situation," he retorted. "If you are not careful, your foolhardiness may cost you your life one of these days. You've absolutely no sense of danger."

"That's why I'm valuable," she called, as he disappeared through the doorway in answer to his employer's summons.

To Ernst's surprise, he found Lester in a state of unusual excitement.

"I have decided to go to Washington to-morrow morning, Miller," he announced, pulling open a chiffonier-drawer and fumbling among the neckwear it contained. "I'm making the trip a little sooner than I had planned. An important meeting has got to be arranged after I get there, and there's nothing like being on time. These are days when men of affairs are pretty well occupied. If a person wants to secure any kind of an interview, he has to lobby for it like a politician—and then he's apt to be disappointed," he added misanthropically.

Had a German bomb fallen at his feet, Ernst could not have been more dumbfounded. Lester's remarks, addressed more to himself than to his man, were made as he bustled about the room collecting certain articles he wished to take with him.

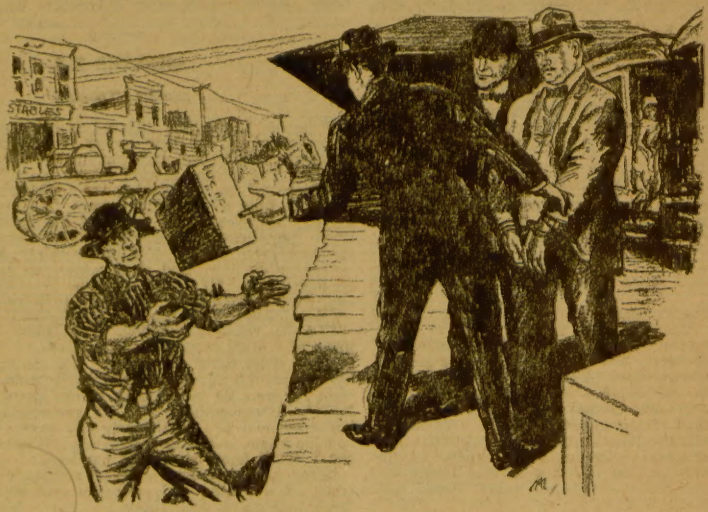
"You can do the packing later to-day," he continued, after indicating what luggage he wanted, "but that black bag on the top shelf in the closet is for my papers. Fetch it to the library when you get it down."

"Yes, sir," Ernst answered respectfully. It was the first he had spoken since entering the room. "Shall you leave on the early train, sir?"

"I'll have to. Can't make good connections otherwise. There are some time-tables on the dresser. I've finished with them. Throw them away."

Lester had no sooner left the room, however, than Ernst, after a cursory glance at the several leaflets, gathered them up and placed them in his pocket.

"May want to take a morning train myself," he muttered, as he pulled down the black bag and started toward the library. "Old fuss-budget! He'll upset everything."



"Ay must have mine box!" cried the boy. One of the men tossed him the box.

Ernst's tranquil face gave no indication of the disturbed state of his mind when he entered the inventor's presence a few moments later. Lester was standing by the library table, replacing in a satin-lined box what appeared to be a piece of jewelry almost as large as the palm of a woman's hand. So absorbed was he that he did not hear Ernst's approach until the latter was almost beside him. Then he looked up hastily, almost warily.

Ernst set the bag down on the table among the papers with which it was strewn. He could not pretend he had not seen the brilliant object in the satin-lined box, for the jewels with which it was set gleamed prismatically in the morning sunshine. Lester was quick to observe his involuntary look of admiration.

"Pretty fine piece of workmanship, eh?" he remarked, pushing the open box a little nearer Miller. "Mystic emblem. Don't suppose you ever saw one like it before. It's what they call a Past-Master's jewel."

"It certainly is very beautiful, sir," Ernst said with sincerity. "Of considerable value, too, I should judge. The setting is unique, is it not?"

"Not particularly so," answered Lester, again taking the box containing the emblem in his hand. "Of course, it is thoroughly individual and its description is recorded. Any one not the rightful owner of such an emblem would have serious difficulty in disposing of it. It couldn't be retained without detection, and it would always bring disaster rather than benefit to any one who tried to make use of it."

"Is its power, then, supposed to be occult?" Ernst had a natural contemptuous disregard for anything which savored of mystery and superstition. He was at all times true to the atheistic teachings of his university. Any mystic significance ascribed to the sparkling em-

blem immediately lessened its value in his estimation. His gaze had already wandered to the miscellany of papers strewn about the table.

"Well, yes, I suppose you might call it that," agreed the inventor. "I am going to take it with me on this trip as a kind of protection." Closing the lid of the box over the emblem, he placed it in the breast-pocket of his coat. "There is some red tape in the left-hand drawer of that desk by the window," he directed. "Get it, please. I want to put these papers in shape."

As he worked Ernst Miller was planning his every move for the next twenty-four hours. "So far as I am concerned, the trick must be turned to-night or never," he reflected. "Musine will be mad as the devil. If the old man had only dropped a hint or made any reference to his inventions, I'd have some idea where to look for the thing. Rudolph made copies of the drawings he submitted, so I don't have to bother about those, but that formula——" A summons to the laboratory diverted his attention and his mind did not consciously finish the sentence.

"The question is," he thought, when he again had time to ponder the matter, "would Lester be apt to put so valuable a secret among the papers in the black bag?"

Ernst's only hope of answering this question lay in his ability to make proper deductions from the inventor's actions throughout the day. In this he was apparently successful, for late in the afternoon he sought Anna and explained to her as much of the work before them as he considered necessary.

"The whole thing is a risk," he assured her. "Whatever we do is bound to be clumsy and precipitate. There isn't time for diplomacy. Lester's premature departure knocks everything in the head. The most we can hope for is to gain possession of the paper and make our getaway before he discovers its loss. Of course, that will be a dead giveaway for us, but it can't be helped. I must get word to Musine. He's up at his summer place for the week-end."

Ernst tossed some railroad folders on the table. "Keep those," he said. "We may want them. Lester is going on the early train over the Central in order to make connections at Wilkes-Barre. I'll have to go to the station with him, but I can get back in time for us to catch the New York train on the Lehigh. You must get everything packed to-night. There'll be no time in the morning."

"But how—what——" stammered Anna.

"Don't ask questions. Just do as I tell you." The inferiority of woman and the idea that her mission in life was merely to serve and be silent were also tenets inculcated by the university curriculum which Ernst had absorbed.

Returning to the library, where he had left the inventor, Ernst was assiduous in his attentions and was finally rewarded by seeing Lester put the final touches to his packings. Even the black bag was complete.

"These papers are so important," Lester remarked reflectively, fingering several closely-written sheets of thin paper. "I wasn't going to put them in the bag until morning; but I might forget them. I guess they'll be as safe there as anywhere else." Carefully placing the papers in the bag, he closed, locked it, and deposited it beside the other hand-baggage which Ernst had brought from the bedroom laboratory. "Now, we are all ready," he observed with satisfaction, rubbing the palms of his hands together and letting his gaze sweep over the little heap of luggage.

The dining-room door, which for several minutes had been suspiciously ajar, now swung silently open and the sound of Anna's voice caused both Ernst and Lester to turn quickly in her direction.

"Dinner is served, sir," she announced, courtesying demurely as the inventor came forward.

The swift glance of commendation which Ernst bestowed upon his sister assured her that she had scored another strategic success.

"Ernst thinks I am a mind reader," she whispered to herself as she retreated into the butler's pantry. "One only needs ears to pick up a cue. Now"—she was moving deftly about, anticipating her employer's every need—"I must give Ernst time. May I serve you, Mr. Lester?" she asked in honeyed accents, as she crossed to the inventor's side. "If we wait for Ernst the dinner will become cold."

"Certainly, certainly," Lester replied pleasantly, adding that it was probably his fault that her brother wasn't ready on time, as he had kept Ernst busy until the last minute.

Not until time for the salad to be served did Anna, in the butler's pantry, hear Ernst enter the kitchen. Instantly she pushed open the swinging-door and darted through to meet him. In two strides he was at her side and had almost roughly snatched the serving-tray from her hands.

"Quick!" he exclaimed, giving her, instead, several thin folded papers, "hide those—upstairs—anywhere—better put them with your things. I'll finish the serving."

With an air of perfect composure he entered the dining-room. As he did so Anna ran lightly up the stairs.

CHAPTER SIX

SECRET MESSAGES

IF Gerald Lester had adhered to his usual routine and gone out on the porch after dinner to smoke, many things might not have happened. Instead, he announced that he had several letters to write which must be gotten off on the evening train and which he wished Ernst to take to the village post. No opportunity presented itself for Ernst to leave the house before that time. Impatient as he was to be off, however, he did not forget to give several final directions to Anna.

"Better lie down and sleep while you have a chance," he urged her. "If Lester happens to open that bag before leaving we'll have to get out in a hurry."

"But there are no night trains," Anna reminded him.

"I know that," he replied. "But there is Ole's. You know where his truck farm is, up back of the little house. He has lived there for years. Not a soul around here knows that he speaks a word of German. If it hadn't been for him I'd never have known about that wireless layout. I was going to use my portable one. Whatever happens, he'll see us through and cover our tracks. I had his name as one to be trusted before I came up here, but I didn't know about the wireless.

After a few more words regarding the Norwegian truck farmer who daily supplied the countryside with fresh vegetables, and whose son was a coal inspector at one of the Ashley mines, Ernst started for the village with Lester's letters. Too late to mail them at the office, he went direct to the station, and when the train pulled in handed them to the mail clerk. Turning away, he noticed a young woman whose height and form corresponded with that of his sister, but who was as distinct a brunette as Anna was a blonde. Apparently she had been the only woman passenger to arrive on the train.

"Won't you try to get me some kind of a conveyance," Ernst heard her say to the driver of the Forest Hotel bus, as the latter made ready to depart with several passengers. "I'll wait here."

"I'll come back myself," shouted the driver as Ernst hurried away, intent now upon his own business.

For a short distance Ernst followed the same road that he and Anna had traversed the morning of their arrival at Mount Forest. Then he left the road and struck off at right angles through the forest, climbing like an athlete over the mountainous pathway, until, after some fifteen minutes' walk, he came in sight of the little house which had aroused the tramp's interest on the previous evening. Ernst, however, came towards the house from the rear. Not lessening his haste, but walking with more than usual caution, he glanced quickly in all directions, then swung around the corner of the building and entered. It was a warm, sultry night, and the interior of the little room seemed stifling.

For several minutes Ernst busied himself with an electrical equipment, which he produced from a hidden wall-cabinet. Then he opened and unlocked a metal box containing papers. Once he paused in his occupation to listen intently. Something, he thought, sounded suspiciously like a footstep among the shrubbery. Cautiously he opened the upper half of the door and looked out. All was quiet; only a slight wind was rising, as though presaging a storm. The fresh air was a relief from the almost fetid atmosphere of the little room in which he was engaged. Returning to his task, he ventured to leave the door ajar.

"Now, where the deuce is that code book?" he muttered, searching among the contents of the metal box. A moment later, having found the book, he adjusted the apparatus familiar to radio operators on his head and seated himself at a little table, ostensibly a carpenter's bench. At that moment a face appeared in the doorway.

Some time elapsed before he was able to secure the connection he desired. Then flash after flash shot forth into the night. The hidden wireless was working well. Just as he was about to put away the papers a man's voice sounded close beside him.

"You needn't trouble to lock that box. We'll take it with us."

For a moment the shock almost unnerved Miller. He had felt so secure, so perfectly safe up there in the mountains that he had long ago cast aside any thought of possible surveillance. Now the suddenness of the attack found him totally unprepared. A strange, numb-like sensation crept over him. Slowly he turned his head in the direction of the voice and saw, looking in at him from the partially open door, the sharp, alert face and keen eyes of the tramp he had only the day before warned from the premises. An insane rage swept over him.

"The devil, you will!" he shouted, snapping the lock of the box and hurling it into the secret recess in the wall. But he was not quick enough. Like an avalanche the tramp was upon him. Together they fell to the floor, rolling over and over in their struggles, fairly well matched, and fighting like demons for mastery. Ernst's stocky build, however, was against him. The strength of his blows, augmented by rage, did not fail of effect on his opponent, but the latter was lithe, wiry and skilled in jiu-jitsu. In five minutes the battle was over, and Ernst, securely handcuffed, could only sit sullenly by while his captor searched papers and premises.

"Well, Miller, who is the other fellow?" questioned the latter at length. "You are not the only one connected with this radio outfit. Who was running it before you came up here? Those reports of the coal situation make interesting reading. When I started on the job you hadn't left New York."

Ernst smiled sneeringly. "Is that so," he retorted. "Well, your shadow didn't know when I left New York."

"Maybe he didn't, but I did," was the reply. "I saw you board the train."

With difficulty Miller repressed a start. "Well, you saw me alone, didn't you?" he queried, wondering if Anna too was in danger.

"Yes, I saw you alone. I didn't accompany you all the way. My business at that time was down the line. But, come, now, are you going to tell me who else is interested in this wireless?"

"I fixed it up myself."

"Miller, you're lying." The tramp, whose Federal badge had become visible for a moment, carefully readjusted it so that it would not show. "I know it and you know it, and you know I know it," he declared. "The point is, Miller, that you are assuming a wrong attitude. It will do neither you nor your confederates any good. The fact that you withhold their names will not prevent my getting them."

"Get them, then," snorted Ernst. "You'll have no help from me."

Stepping to the door, the Federal agent signaled another man who had been waiting outside. "We'll go now," he said.

Without further words the three started by way of the hidden path up which Ernst had so recently climbed back to the main road. From this they turned off at an intersecting dirt road, and by a short cut reached another little village several miles east of Mount Forest. Ernst understood the reason for this. After locking him up, it was the intention of the agents to go back and trap his associates. Had he been taken to Mount Forest certain of the village people would have recognized him and the news of his arrest would have been quickly circulated.

"The dirty dogs!" muttered Ernst to himself, using the epithet so popular among the Germans he knew when referring to any one connected with the government.

One thing was of supreme importance, Anna must be warned. Although he had never taken his sister fully into his confidence, Ernst knew her to be intelligent, clever and discreet. The merest word would be sufficient. That, with his failure to return, would at once cause her to act upon her own initiative. She was already prepared to set forth at a moment's notice. She had plenty of money, explicit directions, addresses, everything necessary, once she got safely away. She knew the great value of the papers which they had risked so much to secure. Moreover, she would be sure to see that he, not Musine, received credit for securing them.

These were the thoughts that kept recurring to Ernst all through the hours of that hot summer night as he and the two government officers sat on the platform of the little village station waiting for a milk train that passed through about three o'clock in the morning for Wilkes-Barre. Just before train-time a country youth appeared with a basket of fresh vegetables and fruits to be shipped.

He was immediately interrogated and persuaded to sell some of the fruit. The boy spoke English haltingly.

"Ay yust kom frum Ole Lindstrom's," he said. "Ay yust bane in Amerika two monater."

The officers laughed, and paid the lad generously for a box of fruit. This they divided with their prisoner, and the manner in which Ernst returned their kindness did not differ in principle from that displayed by the average beneficiary of charitably disposed people's spontaneous generosity.

The awkward youth had said he could talk only Norwegian. Ernst, on the contrary, could converse in a number of languages. He doubted that his captors were equally gifted in that respect. Realizing that the case was desperate, he resolved to take a desperate chance. Under pretense of joking with the lad, Ernst spoke a few words to him in his own tongue. The reply was more than satisfactory. The boy was no dolt. It was merely his inability to speak English which made him appear so.

Under cover of badinage, which Ernst cleverly mistranslated to his companions, he learned that the boy knew the names of the caretakers at the inventor's home, that he was a little uncertain where the house was, but would take a message to the woman, in return for which Ernst assured him that he would later receive a generous reward.

"Let me have the fruit box in my hands while I eat," Ernst told him in Norwegian. "I'll write a message on it. When we leave, tell them you must take back the empty box."

Despite his handcuffed wrists, Ernst contrived to carry out his plan. As the train pulled into the station the boy seemed suddenly galvanized into action.

"Aha! Aha! Mine box," he called lustily. "Ay must have mine box." And one of the men laughingly tossed him the box.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE TAXICAB'S LAST FARE

THE young woman at the Mount Forest railroad station did not have long to wait for the return of the bus driver. This time he presided over a derelict taxicab of early vintage.

"I thought you'd rather ride in the automobile," he announced genially, "so here she is." His pride of own-

ership was apparent. The young woman scanned the Forty-second street relic critically.

"Is it good for hills?" she inquired doubtfully. "I want to go to Mr. Lester's residence—The Hermitage. It's quite a climb."

Pity dimmed the chauffeur's eyes as he turned to reassure her. "Why, lady, that car would climb a church steeple," he declared. "Try her and see. I brought her all the way from Westchester County, New York, to this burg, and she was still able to mark time when we got here."

"Wonderful!" exclaimed the young woman, still hesitant about entering the ark. "After such a trip I should expect it to break down any minute."

"Not with you, lady. I tell you this car will go over anything. She's a regular tank."

"And about as rapid, I imagine," answered the young woman, finally seating herself in the cavernous interior of the cab. "Well, do the best you can."

With a remarkable amount of creaking, groanings and plunges the tank gave a loud snort and shot forward with such violence that the solitary passenger involuntarily assumed an attitude of devotion. Resuming her seat with difficulty, she sat with lips compressed and tightly closed eyes while the car dashed toward an upward grade with the velocity of a meteor, bellowing warnings at every jump. By almost a miracle the sharp turn to the right and the incline beyond were both made without disaster.

"No bones broken so far," said the young woman to herself. "Perhaps he'll drive slower now."

Apparently, however, the church-steeple to which the chauffeur had referred was now in sight, for again the car tore ahead like a crazy thing, pitching this way and that, and then dashing headlong up, up—the passenger thought she must be nearing her destination if heaven were her home—until it suddenly commenced to slacken speed. As the cab gradually assumed a more perpendicular poise its progress became slower and slower, until, with a final shiver and groan, it ceased altogether. Britannia's successor would never climb again.

For some few moments the sole surviving owner labored heroically to resuscitate the remains, but without avail. At length he opened the cab door and accosted his fare.

"I'm sorry, lady," he said, "but I guess you'll have to walk the rest of the way. It ain't far. Just beyond that bend yonder is where The Hermitage road cuts in. I'll go with you if you're afraid—but I ought to get this car off to one side. Somebody might run into it."

The young woman descended and viewed the defunct cab with the calmness of a next of kin taking a final look at the corpse of a wealthy relative. "Perhaps if you went to The Hermitage my father's man might be able to help you," she suggested to the supposedly sorrowing chauffeur. The optimism of his reply surprised and shocked her.

Britannia's successor, he opined, was beyond hope. "I'm sick of the blamed cab," he grumbled. "I've tried for two months to wreck it and now I've done it."

"But I thought you valued the car!" his late passenger exclaimed in amazement. "You praised it highly."

The chauffeur faced her almost defiantly. "Well," he replied, "and didn't she do everything I said she could? Didn't we run over a chicken down there as good as a tank could? You never heard a squawk. And didn't she come up these hills like a bird—as far as she went? The car was all right, but she's had to be wet nursed and dry nursed and kindergartened day and night, and it's been pretty hard on me. I've got my future to think of. Now that the car's off my hands I can hunt up some relatives and go visit them for a spell. I can save enough board that way to buy another car. I've had three already."

Congratulating the speaker upon his good fortune in the possession of automobiles and relatives in sufficient number to insure business prosperity, and declining his repeated offer to escort her farther, the young woman set forth alone in the direction of The Hermitage.

Because of her familiarity with the road she walked slowly. The forest stillness pleased her. It was soothing after the noise and jolting of the steeple-climbing taxicab to walk off alone into the silence of the summer night. She was unconscious of fear, and yet, just as she turned from the main road into the grounds of The Hermitage, she thought she saw a shadow among the bushes which moved as she approached. Chiding herself for what she termed foolish imagination, she did not quicken her pace, but as she neared the house she distinctly heard a footstep close at hand and became suddenly obsessed with the thought that she was being followed. Involuntarily she commenced to run. Dashing up the steps of The Hermitage, she fled through the open door and flung herself into the arms of the inventor just as he was about to return to the porch with a fresh cigar.

"Vivian!" he exclaimed, kissing her fondly. "Why, where did you come from? Who was with you? Did you meet Miller down at the station? Why didn't you telegraph?" Then, noticing her agitation, he finished his questions by asking what was the matter.

Vivian drew him back into the library, dropped down into a chair and laughed. "I'm just silly, that's all," she gasped hysterically. "I've had the funniest experience with a village chauffeur and a nightmare of a taxicab that broke down when only part way here, and, as I came on alone, I got 'the jimmies,' as the schoolgirls say, and thought some one was after me. I dare say if your new man was down at the station he may have seen me and wondered what I was coming here for. It was probably his shadow that I saw."

Thus, mutually reassured, the inventor and his daughter sat talking until the thought occurred to Lester that Vivian must receive some attention. "I doubt if Miller has come in yet," he said. "He usually makes a tour of the grounds about this time every night, but I'll ring for Anna. She can fix you some iced tea and——"

Vivian interrupted. "No, please don't," she pleaded hastily. "I don't want anything. I dined on the train. And, above all, I don't feel equal to interviewing either of those paragons to-night. I've been through too much already. It will be time enough for me to see them—and maybe dismiss them—to-morrow morning." She laughed teasingly at the sudden look of dismay on her father's face.

"But, my dear," he protested, "they are really excellent—the most adept we have had."

Vivian's hand closed playfully over his mouth. "Father, I don't want to talk about the saints to-night," she declared, with a trace of petulance. "See how it lightnings outside. It's heat lightning. It always makes me feel as if the air was full of little red imps, so let the saints rest. I'll surprise them at breakfast to-morrow morning. Now," she continued, "I want you to explain to me this sudden trip to Washington."

Upstairs in the room at the end of the house Anna had spent the evening packing. The heat was intense. She noticed with a sense of relief that a breeze was rising and hastened her preparations that she might the sooner turn out the light and lie down on the chintz-covered couch under the windows.

"I'll put the papers and my money together," she reflected, "and keep my motoring cloak within easy reach. There's nothing like a long coat and cap when one wants to make a quick disappearance."

She patted various articles carefully into place in the suitcase which contained her wearing apparel, but fastened the money and papers in a small cloth bag, to be tied about her person. This she placed temporarily on the dresser. Her brother, she decided wearily, could pack his own things after returning from the village. Anna was inclined to wonder, once, at Ernst's long absence, but recollected that he had said something about sending a message to Musine. Assuming that he had experienced difficulty in getting connections, she put aside any uneasiness, and, with a sigh, flung herself down on the couch and closed her eyes.

It was after eleven o'clock when Vivian and her father parted for the night—she to steal softly up to her room over the reception-hall, taking care, as she explained, not to wake the paragons; he to sit by the window in his room

on the ground floor and smoke a final cigar before retiring.

Vivian, exhausted by the events of the evening and the fatigue of her journey, lost no time in preparing for bed. When at last she raised the shades to admit what cool zephyrs were stirring among the tall pine trees of the forest, she stood for a moment in the darkened room looking out into the night and fancied she discerned three indistinct figures making their way along the old dirt road leading to the next village. Had she but known that the one in the center was a paragon fallen from grace, with fully developed handcuffs and prison raiment in prospect, she would have recalled with alarm her augury of evil resultant from fallen angels which she had written to her lover in France.

As it was, however, she watched the three blurred outlines with no conscious premonition of disaster, then turned to her bed and was almost immediately asleep.

CHAPTER EIGHT

FIRE

As midnight approached the slight breeze which had arisen earlier in the evening died away, leaving a sultry, humid atmosphere that the inventor found particularly oppressive. Dozing in his chair by the window, for it had been too warm, he thought, to go to bed, his sleep was disturbed by a vivid and persistent dream.

German hordes, he thought, had invaded his home, carried off Vivian in a taxicab, and confiscated his cherished invention. In a supreme effort to save his daughter he had flung, with all his might, the mystic emblem of his order, and it had fallen at her feet. But, unseen by her, a cunning hand, slim and well kept, had reached forth and covered the jewel, when suddenly beneath the outstretched fingers of the hand there had arisen the wonderful electric currents which were a part of his discovery. Coiling and circling like angry serpents, they shot forth with steadily increasing power until they held the hand in a death-like grip, beneath which it shriveled and writhed, but could not escape. Like a fair spirit surrounded by enemies Vivian stood, apparently unconscious of her danger, while the vast, explosive forces of his invention, strangely filtering forth from the mystic emblem, merged and culminated in a giant explosion. When the smoke had cleared away nothing remained of the cunning hand or of the German hordes, but Vivian, with the bejeweled emblem at her feet, stood, as he had seen her last, smiling at him from across a river of gold.

So vivid was the dread that Lester, when he awoke, could not efface it from his memory. It perplexed and haunted him. What if Vivian was right, he wondered, and his servants untrustworthy? Involuntarily he felt in his pocket. The Past-Master's jewel was safe. For a moment the troubled face of the inventor was illumined by a smile of mingled cunning and conscious power. Perhaps the dream was a good omen, after all.

But that sinister hand? The papers in the black bag? Were they still safe? He looked nervously about. Where was that bag, anyway? He had meant to fetch it with him to his room. Vivian's unexpected arrival had made him forgetful. In his perturbation he started impulsively toward the door, then paused, impatiently, angry with himself for giving way to such nervous fears. Mechanically, from sheer force of habit and not with any consciousness of the act, he took up a cigar from the table, lighted it, and flung the match, as he supposed, out of the window. It fell short. Unnoticed by Lester, the tiny flicker of its flame seared the window-sill just where the thin, dotted swiss curtains were held in folds by a silken cord. With a muttered ejaculation the inventor again turned to go in search of the black bag. This time he did not hesitate. Throwing the door wide open behind him, he went straight down the hall, past the laboratory, across the reception-hall, and into the library. As he did so the current of air, released by the sudden opening of the door, fanned into new life the dying spark on the window-sill and sent a fiery thread creeping along the silken cord and into the muslin drapery.

After he had switched on the lights in the library, Lester breathed a sigh of relief. There was the black bag, just as he had left it some hours before. The sight of it and the knowledge that it was safe caused a nervous reaction that set him trembling. With almost faltering hands he took up the bag, inserted the key, and realized, with a shock, that the lock was broken. Some one had tampered with it. Lester's heart, always troublesome, fairly stopped beating. With a gasp he tottered into a chair and in feverish haste opened the bag.

His papers—the papers on which he had spent such weeks of work and designed for only government use—were gone!

For a few seconds Lester sat with closed eyes, as if paralyzed. He felt cold, numb, incapable of thought or action. Doctors had warned him, he remembered, against any sudden shock or violent excitement. He had suffered heart attacks before, but never anything so death-like in effect. He wished Vivian were with him. She always knew what to do. He exerted himself to call her name, but his lips would utter no sound. He tried to rise, but fell back, limp and inert, as billows of dull gray mist floated in from the hall mingled with the pungent odor of burning wood. But woodland mist did not choke and smart and strangle. This was not mist, it was smoke. His dazed mind sensed the situation slowly. Then a panic seized him.

"Fire!"

His voice was the merest whisper. By an almost superhuman effort he extended his right arm until his hand touched the electric button which would set every bell in the house to ringing.

Vivian awoke with a start. The electric alarm in her room was ringing loudly. She sat up and rubbed her eyes. Something choked her. Again the bell rang, this time but feebly, breaking off with a sharp click. Springing from the bed, she caught up a soft, silken negligée and flung it about her. As she did so she noticed that the room seemed filled with smoke. She ran to the door and peered through the hallway, at the same time switching on the electric lights. They glanced dimly amid murky clouds. With a cry of terror she fled toward the staircase.

"Father—father—oh, help—fire!" she screamed, and making her way with difficulty around the turn in the hallway on the lower floor. But progress in the direction of her father's room was completely barred. Choking and half blinded, Vivian turned and fled toward the library, still retaining sufficient presence of mind to close the door behind her. Here the smoke was not so dense. For the merest instant she stood gasping, then as she turned toward the long French windows she saw the limp, huddled form of her father, apparently unconscious, in the leather chair into which he had fallen.

Rushing toward him, Vivian frantically threw her arms about him, uttering every endearing epithet she had ever used when addressing him. Slowly, oh, so slowly, it seemed to the terrified girl, he at length opened his eyes and looked into her face. His hand brushed against her hair.

"Vivian—my child——" he whispered feebly. She had to place her ear close to his lips to catch the words. "Don't wait—go—the laboratory—explosives—nothing can save."

"But, father, come, we must escape," she implored wildly, struggling to raise him from the depths of the great chair. "Can't you make a little effort? Please." She was exerting all her strength, but without avail.

The inventor's head sank wearily forward on his breast. "My hour—has come," he murmured. "My heart——" The crackling of flames drowned his feeble effort to speak. A panel of the door fell. Licking tongues of flame crept through. Vivian had him from the chair now, but his tall, powerful frame was a dead weight. She essayed a step, only to feel him slipping from her grasp. Again she bent over him and urged him to help himself

a little. He gave no sign of having heard her. With a crash and a roar the door gave way and flames poured through into the room. On the instant Lester opened his eyes. One glance and Vivian realized that death was already upon him. He could well defy the flames. With a strength of which she had not believed him capable, he thrust her from him.

"Go——" he shouted, his voice almost maniacal in its fierceness. "Take this," pulling from his inside coat-pocket the small box which even at that moment Vivian recognized as the one containing his treasured lodge emblem. "Escape—save it—it is worth more to me than life. It will bring you—all—you desire."

A choke and rattle in his throat prevented further utterance. His eyes set, his form stiffened, and he fell heavily forward into Vivian's arms. The sudden impact almost overwhelmed her. Again she strove to drag the now lifeless form with her to the window, but the box in her hand made it impossible to get a firm hold. Her father's dying words seemed to echo and re-echo through the blinding smoke and glare about her. With a sob she saw the flames already attacking his clothing. She herself was afire. Shrieking wildly and clutching the little satin-lined box to her breast, she plunged headlong through the full-length open French window and ran blindly on, stumbling, falling, weeping, until the ground suddenly shook under her feet, a muffled explosion sounded, and, as the sky lighted up with a vivid glare, she felt herself thrown face downward into a clump of bushes.

CHAPTER NINE

FLIGHT

WITH the first faint tinge of dawn showing on the eastern horizon, that which seemed to be a bundle of tattered clothing cast into the brambles stirred ever so slightly, but enough to reveal the outlines of a woman. She opened her eyes. A tremulous, moaning sob escaped her as the rough branches of the shrubbery in which she was lying came in contact with her face and limbs. For a few moments she lay, weak and passive, with no coherent thought, as though waking at a little past three o'clock of a summer's morning in the midst of fragrant shrubbery, clad only in a nightgown and tattered negligée, was an every-day experience. Slowly she sat up and looked about her. Above a bird twittered, in the distance a cock crowed, and far around a bend in the mountain echoed the whistle of the locomotive attached to the early morning milk train.

Oblivious of these things, the girl drew the fragments of her scanty clothing about her and essayed to rise. She felt bruised and dazed. Everything seemed strange, yet peaceful. The stillness awed her. Cautiously she crept forth from the shrubbery and into the open. It was yet too dark to observe much, but in the center of what seemed to be a carefully kept lawn appeared a huge, smoking mass of dull red embers that sizzled and snapped, sending forth little jets of steam from time to time, then dying away into black, repellant ugliness. For the first time the girl realized that rain must have fallen, for the ground about her was wet and sodden. Her clothing too, what was left of it, flapped about her, heavy with moisture. Yet the morning was not cold. It was close, humid and suffocating. The odor of burnt wood was particularly unpleasant. As she approached nearer the steaming, sizzling mass of ruins terror suddenly possessed her. What did it all mean? What had happened? Where was she? Why was she wearing wet and ragged clothing?

She stood still and tried to think. The effort was useless. The whole scene meant nothing to her. It was evident there had been a fire. She could see that, but what had it to do with her? The increasing realization of utter helplessness, her inability to recall any event which might serve to solve the mystery of her presence there at such an hour only intensified the girl's fear. Looking down into the embers before her, she became suddenly sensible of one overpowering thought. She must get away, escape, before it was too late, and she must take something with her. But how—what?

The trailing garment she was wearing caught on a loose bit of débris and impeded her footsteps. She tore it from her and tossed it aside. Where were her clothes, she wondered? She could not go abroad clad in a nightgown. Her feet were already scratched and bruised. Perhaps, if she searched, she would find her shoes. Dropping on her knees, she crept slowly about on the ground, and was at last rewarded by coming in contact with what proved to be a suitcase, unfastened at one end as though it had fallen heavily from some height. She tried the lock. The key had not been turned. Some one, in haste, must have forgotten it.

Eagerly she threw open the suitcase and examined its contents. With each moment the desire to get away grew more intense. She was conscious of a vague fear that something terrible would befall her if she remained. As the morning light grew clearer she could readily discern the objects which she now lifted from the suitcase. Undoubtedly they were her own. She could not recall ever having seen them before, but they comprised every possible thing for which she might have need.

Forcing them back into the suitcase, she gathered it in her arms and again picked her way across the lawn to the shelter of the shrubbery. Here she divested herself of the bedraggled nightrobe and dressed completely in clothing from the suitcase. It must be her own, she reasoned, for the garments fitted perfectly. All were dainty and of fine quality. To her scratched and bruised feet the silk stockings and soft leather pumps proved particularly comforting. Whoever had packed the suitcase had evidently prepared for a journey. Even toilet articles were not lacking. By their aid she was enabled to arrange her coiffure and efface the marks of the brambles on her face. A motoring cloak of tan silk, so soft and sheer that it might almost be rolled and carried in a hand-bag, with a becoming hood to match, completed her attire. She slipped her hands into the deep pockets of the cloak and found gloves, handkerchief and purse. The latter contained a few coins and several visiting cards. In the rosy morning light which now illumined the sky the name engraved on the cards was clearly discernible:

"MISS ANNA MILLER."

So that was her name. How strange, she thought, that she had been unable to recollect it. She had seen the initials on the wearing apparel back of the toilet articles and on the handkerchief, but they had suggested nothing to her. She wondered if she could have been ill. Perhaps it was a hospital or sanitarium that had burned. Stooping to rearrange the remaining articles in the suitcase, she uncovered a small cloth bag. This, apparently, had been thrust in hastily, for it was upside-down, and some of the papers it contained had fallen out. Noticing a tree near by with a seat encircling it, she went over and sat down. There she examined the papers closely. "Automobile Road Map." She read the penciled notation and laid the paper aside. It did not interest her. "Names and addresses of discreet persons who may be trusted." This she placed in the pocket of the long cloak she was wearing. "Directions to insure personal safety." That was what she wanted. Unfolding the several papers under this heading, she read the written instructions eagerly.

"Observe the map." That was the first direction. "Leave, if possible, from the Junction (marked X). Go to Brooklyn. Deliver enclosed letter of introduction." She searched for the letter. Having found it, the fact that it was written in German did not disturb her. She had studied German for years at school, and as a child with her German governess. She read the letter easily. It bore no name, merely a residence address in Brooklyn, and stated, in substance, that the bearer, Anna Miller, was loyal, discreet and would obey instructions. It sug-

gested that due attention be given to her financial requirements and demanded, as a right, that she receive every assistance and protection available in time of need. The initialed signature was too intricate to be deciphered, apparently some confidential hieroglyphic, which would be understood by the proper persons.'

Feeling much relieved as to her future, the girl also put this letter into the pocket of her coat, where it would be within convenient reach, and resumed her perusal of the list of instructions. A further search of the cloth bag revealed a roll of money, totaling quite a substantial sum. Taking out a few bills, she returned the rest to the bag, along with various papers. Several closely written sheets of thin paper, separate from the others, attracted her attention. They were written in English, but seemed to be fragmentary and disconnected. A bit of red tape held them together, and on the blank edge of the outer one was written in a small hand: "Valuable. Secure patent."

Something about the handwriting impressed her as strangely familiar. It seemed as though she must have seen it some time in a dream, the memory was so intangible. For a moment, after replacing all the articles in the bag, she sat vainly trying to solve the mystery with which she felt herself surrounded. Unquestionably she was Anna Miller, but why could she not recall more about herself? The effort to think made her head ache. She rose, fastened the little cloth bag securely about her person, and returned to the spot where she had left the suitcase. On a railroad folder slipped under one of the straps she observed a conspicuous pencil mark opposite figures indicating the time of departure of a morning train on the Lehigh Valley road. A hasty glance at the sun, now rapidly rising, reminded her that if she wanted to get that train she must make haste. Kneeling to fasten the suitcase, a dark object in the grass near by attracted her attention. She picked it up, examined it, and found it to be a small, satin-lined box containing a mystic emblem blazing with jewels.

With an involuntary cry of admiration she stood, gazing at the beautiful object in her hand. In that instant she became sensible of an overwhelming fear that it was going to be wrested from her. Her knees shook, her breath came in short, quick gasps. The unaccountable terror which had possessed her twice before that morning again swept over her. She must get away, anywhere, to escape the horror which always seemed to be behind her. And that beautiful trinket! She remembered now. It belonged to her. It was the treasure she must take with her, and she would guard it with her life. Closing the little box, she slipped it hastily into the bosom of her dress, then caught up the suitcase and fled from the scene—the victim of a form of aphasia.

"Go!" he shouted. "Take this!" pulling from his inside pocket a small box containing his lodge emblem.

CHAPTER TEN

THE MAN IN THE RACING-CAR.

COINCIDENT with the girl's flight by way of an unfrequented woodland path, which cut through to the road leading to the junction, a farm-wagon laden with fresh vegetables moved leisurely down The Hermitage driveway and came to a sudden halt when the man on the driver's seat beheld the devastation before him. Springing from the wagon, he ran toward what had been the front of the inventor's house and inspected the smouldering ruins. Destruction had been complete. For a moment the man stood staring, then his head moved ponderously, as if acquiescing in the calamity, deeply though he deplored it.

"Ach, ja, ja, ja!" he ejaculated under his breath. "Fire here. Ich fear——"

What it was he had feared was not made clear, for just then his attention was attracted toward that part of the hedge which had been nearest the side of the house where the laboratory was situated. Striding in that direction, he stooped, gathered the object, whatever it was, in his arms, and, after depositing it in his wagon, turned his horses, applied the whip and drove rapidly away.

Ten minutes later a racing-car of the newest design sped like a gray streak along an old, disused road, which wound across the hills to the north, entering The Hermitage grounds at the rear. Some distance from the site of the house the driver of the car stopped his motor, descended, and proceeded afoot. Making his way around a small boulder, he came suddenly upon the scene of the night's conflagration and stood as if riveted to the spot. Slowly he raised a slim, well-kept hand and stroked the close-cut, pointed beard which accentuated the oval contour of his face. Though outwardly calm, the nervous biting of his full, red underlip betokened his mental disquietude. For several minutes he stood there deep in reflection, his dark, unfathomable eyes focused upon the charred pyre before him, yet gazing apparently into space.

Like one who, after due consideration, has decided upon

a definite course of action, he turned at length and retraced his steps much more rapidly than he had come. Once he glanced at his wrist-watch.

"I'll have to hurry," he whispered to himself. A few minutes more and he was again speeding in the gray racer along the outskirts of the forest toward the open road beyond.

But the nose of the gray racer was not pointed back toward the hills; instead it kept an entirely different course, following the dirt road which led past the little station of the Lehigh Valley Railroad.

Some distance ahead, at a fork of that same road, a young woman, burdened with a suitcase, was hailed by a country youth, who nimbly vaulted a rail fence and ran toward her, gesticulating with an empty berry-box.

"Ay go to Lester's house, vich vay?" He pointed in the opposite directions, indicating that he was undecided which way to go.

The young woman, whose motoring-cap had been loosened and hung about her neck, looked very youthful. She smiled back at the youth and shook her head. "I do not know," she said.

"I vant Dame Anna Miller."

At the mention of the name the girl started forward. Here, at last, was something tangible; some connection with the outer world which might explain all which now baffled her.

"I am Miss Anna Miller," she said slowly. Even the sound of her voice seemed strained and unnatural. "Did you wish to speak to me?"

The boy looked into her sweetly smiling eyes, and any doubts he may have had must have been instantly dispelled. There was no deceit there. Unquestionably the person before him was the one he sought.

"Det var fortalt mig at baere til dig dette skrivning," he said in Norwegian; then, realizing from the look of astonishment on her face that she could not understand his words, he thrust the box toward her, indicating the dimly penned words with his finger. They were written in German:

"As you value your life, say nothing. Follow directions. Go; leave no trace. ERNST."

With the reading of the words a chill crept over the girl. What did it all mean? Who was Ernst? Why should her life be in danger? The boy, who stood waiting, again commenced to speak volubly in Norwegian. He was trying to explain something, but she could not understand. From his gestures she inferred that the writer of the message was under arrest. The thought terrified her. She tried to crush the frail, wooden box in her hands. The boy, divining her intention, took it from her and in an instant broke it to bits. She thanked him, pressed a bill into his hand and watched him depart across the field and into the wood beyond.

"Spurlos versenkt—leave no trace," she kept repeating under her breath. Was it possible that she was asleep and would awake presently to find this whole hideous experience merely a dream? She picked up the suitcase and once more set forth, wondering how much farther it was to the railroad-station marked X on the map, to which she again referred.

Before proceeding a dozen yards she was startled by the warning siren of an automobile, and a gray racing-car flashed by her, going like the wind. Almost instantly, however, it slackened speed and within a remarkably short distance came to a stop.

At her approach the man driving the car addressed her courteously; his voice, manner and personal appearance indicated that he was a person of refinement. He asked if she had come far and if he might not take her on her way in his car. She thanked him, and, mindful of the penciled warning to go and leave no trace, was about to decline his offer, when his next words deterred her.

"I judge you are going to the junction," he said, indicating the suitcase which she had temporarily deposited on the ground. "It is quite a little distance yet and you'll be apt to miss your train if you don't ride. It is almost due now."

"Why, I—I can take the next one," she stammered in reply, wondering how he knew what train she planned to take.

"I am afraid you are somewhat of a stranger about here," he remarked with a reassuring smile. "This is only a flag station, you know. There are but two trains a day each way that stop up here, one in the morning and one in the evening. The west-bound train passed more than an hour ago, so you see I couldn't help knowing that you were trying to make the east-bound one."

"You are very kind," she exclaimed, striving to appear at ease. "I—I had forgotten about the trains."

The stranger was almost paternal in his solicitude as he assisted her into the low-built car. "I was driving pretty fast," he observed when the car was again in motion; "but I don't think it will be necessary now. There is time enough if I just go at a moderate rate, and I dare say you are not used to racing speed."

She assured him that she was not. As they drove along he tried repeatedly to elicit some information from her as to where she had come from and her place of destination. Each time she tactfully evaded his questions. Though his courtesy was faultless and his appearance prepossessing, she was sensible of a vague fear of him. An undefined feeling that in some manner she was destined sooner or later to come under his power caused her to shrink back farther into the low seat of the racing-car and take refuge more and more in extreme reticence.

The man was Musine. Disturbed by the receipt of a message from Miller to the effect that the inventor's valuable secret was already secured and that the latter purposed starting for the capital in the morning, he had driven like mad all through the night to reach The Hermitage before dawn, if possible, and receive from Ernst the papers in question. By doing so, he reasoned, he could be far away by the time the loss of the papers was discovered, Miller and his sister would avoid detection, and, by remaining on the premises, would the more readily avert suspicion. Every moment the papers remained in their possession increased the danger, for Lester might decide before going to the train to open the bag in which he had locked them overnight.

These were the thoughts which hour after hour had kept Musine company throughout that wild night-ride. Had he not possessed greater endurance than the average individual the sight of the blackened embers, where the inventor's house had once stood, would have completely unnerved him. Instead, however, it only seemed to intensify his cool, cunning and calculating instinct. During the few minutes he had stood reflectively staring at the ruins a very probable solution as to the cause had presented itself to his mind.

Lester doubtless had discovered the theft of his priceless formula, thought Musine. There had been a struggle; Miller, in self-defense, had been obliged to resort to force. The house had been burned to cover evidences of the crime. Miller and his sister would, of course, plan to get away on the earliest train. They would not be likely to go to the village, where they would be recognized. No automobile being available, their most natural course would be to leave by way of the Lehigh Valley road, taking the train at the isolated little flag station so seldom used. Moreover, since he wished to avoid attracting attention to himself in any degree, Musine deemed it inadvisable to return by the same route he had come; and, more vital to his interests than all else, he wanted possession of that formula, that he, not Miller, might be the agent through whose hands it would ultimately reach the government, in whose interests he was acting. That he would receive an iron cross or other decoration for the service rendered he had no doubt. He was willing to risk much to that end.

Now, here was this girl. Who was she? Where did she come from? The fact that she should be abroad, so far from any habitation at so early an hour in the morning, and yet from all appearances had not traveled any considerable distance, was in itself peculiar. Musine had

never seen Miller's sister. There was a possibility that this girl was she. Therefore he had stopped and asked her to ride. If the girl was not Miller's sister and there should happen to be other persons than those he expected to find at the station, his driving up with a woman passenger would give him a legitimate reason for appearing there himself.

Again he tried to engage the girl in conversation. She was extremely beautiful. Musine was very susceptible to pretty women. Conscious of his own personal attractions, he was also vain of his conquests. By dint of clever questioning he learned at last that the girl beside him purposed taking the Hudson Tubes at Jersey City. He was also convinced from her vague replies and evident nervousness that she was not only trying to conceal something, but that she actually came from The Hermitage. To his great surprise, when they arrived at the junction a few moments ahead of train-time, she was the only waiting passenger.

"Thank you very much indeed, she said, as he assisted her up the steps of the train; "I should have been too late had it not been for you."

"Don't mention it," he replied; "it was a pleasure. I hope some day that we may meet again." His dark, mysterious eyes were for an instant turned full upon her. She was sensible of their fascination, although they repelled.

"I—perhaps so. Good-morning," she answered in much confusion from the tops of the steps.

He looked at her long and steadily. He would know her among a thousand. The train was already moving. She smiled back at him. He lifted his hat. As she turned to enter the car her ears caught his parting words:

"Auf Wiedersehen."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

RUDOLPH PLAYS SLEUTH

BEFORE the train was out of sight Musine had formulated a plan. Pulling an automobile road map from his pocket, he studied it for a moment, then refolded it, hastily putting it back in his pocket and taking his seat in the car. Another moment and the gray racer was again tearing along at express-train speed. Leaving the seldom-used dirt road over which he had been traveling, Musine now made straight for the splendidly built macadamized automobile road, which extended from beyond Mount Forest down through the mountain to Wilkes-Barre.

"I'll catch the Pennsylvania Express there," he muttered to himself as he glanced at his wrist-watch and threw in as much gas as he dared, to ensure greater speed.

At Wilkes-Barre he left the racing-car at a garage. Then he sent a telegram to Rudolph, Timothy Clark's secretary. That accomplished, he boarded the express train that daily made a record run to New York.

It was not yet dark when he arrived at Jersey City. Rudolph was waiting. No words passed between the two until they had drawn somewhat aside from the crowd of people about them. Rudolph was the first to speak.

"Trouble?" he inquired laconically, smiling slightly, though his eyes were downcast.

"Hard to tell," answered Musine. "Miller's gone; house is gone; everything's gone. Don't know what to think. The formula was in Miller's hands the last I heard."

"Better take a look at *The Evening World*." Rudolph drew a copy of the paper from his pocket and indicated a conspicuous head-line.

"Oh, they've got it, have they?" was Musine's comment as he hastily ran his eyes down the length of the column. "I thought it would cause a stir. Clark's preliminary report on Lester's invention aroused considerable interest among certain members of the Senate last week. They were anticipating wonderful results when Lester came down to give the practical demonstration. His death would naturally cause excitement; but"—he stroked his beard in his habitual manner when in deep thought—"that queer about his daughter being up there. Miller didn't mention her when he wired me. I wonder if it's a mistake?"

"Hardly," Rudolph opined; "notice at the bottom of the column where it says what time she left the Waldorf. The page-boy on the fourteenth floor was going off duty and went to the train with her, and some chauffeur at Mount Forest declares he took her to the house."

Again Musine considered. "What I want to know," he said at length, "is what has become of Ernst Miller and his sister Anna? I don't believe that that fire was caused by any accidental explosion during one of Lester's experiments."

"You think——" Rudolph had a trick of making his impassive face and drooping eyes very suggestive when he was so minded. He did not complete his sentence, but paused significantly.

"I think that neither of them was a victim of that holocaust and that one of them at least can explain how it occurred; in fact, I am not so sure but that I had the honor of escorting Miss Miller on a portion of her journey this morning. That is why I telegraphed for you to meet me. I want you to find out."

The younger man laughed dryly. "Joke!" he ejaculated. "I like that. If you were with her, why didn't you find out?"

"Because she declined to enlighten me." Musine then recounted briefly the events of the morning. "So you see," he added in conclusion, "she would recognize me in a minute. But as soon as the train comes in over the Lehigh I'll 'spot her out' to you, as they say in sleuth circles, then you can 'pick her up' and play shadow to your heart's content."

Rudolph grinned. "Clark's going over to Washington again Friday," he observed irrelevantly. "I'll be going with him."

"That's all right," Musine agreed. "I'm not chartering you for an indefinite period. All I want is to find out who she is, where she goes and where she came from."

"Then we'd better move. If that train's on time it ought to be in about now."

Together the two went to meet the train which the girl, wearing the motoring cloak and cap and carrying a broken suitcase, had boarded in the early morning. It was not difficult to distinguish her among the group of arriving passengers. Musine pointed her out to Rudolph and then quickly disappeared. The latter, interested and plainly amused by his new rôle, proceeded with downcast eyes, apparently oblivious of everything about him, to keep within surprisingly close proximity of the girl he was shadowing.

From the first it became apparent that she had a distinct objective in view. She did not hesitate nor ask information; she engaged the services of a porter, and in New York took a cab to Brooklyn. Fortunately the cab Rudolph secured to follow hers had a skilful driver, else he would have lost sight of his quarry entirely. To his surprise, the street on which he finally found himself was very familiar. As the cab ahead of him drew up before the old-fashioned brownstone-front house, his driver slowed down, and, upon instructions from Rudolph, drove leisurely past the other cab, stopping farther down the block.

"That's one on Musine," thought Rudolph, the corners of his mouth curling slightly in one of his furtive smiles. After paying and dismissing the chauffeur, he went to the nearest drug-store, entered a telephone-booth and called a Brooklyn number. His conversation was brief. Ten minutes later he was admitted at the basement entrance of the same house which the girl in the motor cloak had entered but a short time before.

The woman who received him was a little past middle age, of medium height, inclined to fleshiness, with large hands reddened by hard work, thin, iron-gray, irregular features and sharp eyes. She wore an ordinary blue gingham check house dress, not overclean, and a brown kitchen apron. When she spoke it was with a pronounced German accent and emphatic manner. Her entire personality conveyed the impression that she would be a danger-

ous antagonist. Toward her caller, however, her bearing was ingratiating, almost deferential.

"Come in, come right in," she insisted, as Rudolph paused at the doorway. "She's not here; you'll not meet her; she's up in her room. I gave her the one on the parlor floor. She was awfully tired, poor thing; didn't want to walk. Said her head ached. I just took her up a cup of tea.

Rudolph stepped inside and the woman, whom he addressed as Mrs. Ridder, ushered him through a broad basement hallway, past a large refrigerator heavily laden with bottles—some full, some empty—and into a spacious living-room.

"These are my own rooms down here," Mrs. Ridder explained. "I make them home-like. Sometimes we have music—see?" She indicated the upright piano strewn with music, most of it German songs. Rudolph accepted the chair she placed for him, explaining that his errand was brief.

"The man higher up will probably get in touch with you to-morrow," he said, smiling. "All he wanted to know to-night was whether this girl was Miller's sister or not?"

"Sure she is," answered the woman quickly. "You don't think I'd have let her in if I hadn't been sure, do you?" The question carried a tone of aggression, which Rudolph was quick to deflect by assurances of confidence in Mrs. Ridder's judgment. "I've got her letter, if you'd like to see it?" the latter continued. "It's got the consul's signature." She placed in his hands the missive with the interwoven initials, which introduced the bearer, Anna Miller, as one loyal, discreet and willing to obey directions.

"I guess that's all that is necessary," Rudolph remarked as he returned the letter to her. "It seems to be all right. Sorry I'm going away; I'd like to meet the lady. When did they finish this passage?" he asked suddenly as he again entered the long hallway to go out. "I thought they were still working on it."

"Sh-h-h!" Mrs. Ridder held up a warning finger. "Be careful; walls sometimes have ears, you know."

Surprised, Rudolph raised his lowered eyes and for an instant looked the speaker straight in the face.

"Why, I thought——" he commenced, when she interrupted.

"They're cats!" she declared. "Cats! Two of them; and there's nothing escapes them. They peek and listen from morning till night. I'll tell you what we've done." She came close to him, and, as he bent his head, spoke softly into his ear.

CHAPTER TWELVE

MYSTERY AND SUSPICION

"MISS MILLER, Miss Miller! Here's the morning paper. There's a big account about the burning of Mr. Lester's house. They've got pictures, too. It says you were burned to death. I thought you would want to read it."

Roused by the insistent voice outside her door, the girl in bed sat up and listened. For an instant she could not recollect where she was. The room seemed strangely unfamiliar. And who was this person knocking at the door and talking about a fire? The girl rubbed her eyes and tried to collect her thoughts. Little by little she remembered the events of the preceding day.

"The fire? Oh, yes; I do want to read about the fire," she called in reply. "Thank you so much for bringing me the paper. Just leave it at the door, please; I'll come and get it."

Slipping out of bed, she ran to the door and secured the paper, at the same time accepting her landlady's offer to bring her some breakfast. The tragedy at The Hermitage, she found, had been played up to advantage by the newspaper people. The picture of the inventor's daughter, whose life had been lost, interested her strangely; yet the blurred cut did not represent a very beautiful girl; on the contrary she looked rather boyish. The caption under it stated that it had been taken when she was riding with her father in Central Park several years previous. And to think that she, Anna Miller, had been doing the cooking and housework for this inventor! Involuntarily she glanced down at her hands. They were soft, white and shapely. Several costly rings gleamed upon her fingers.

"Impossible! Incredible!" she gasped under her breath. "And this—Ernst, my brother! I wish I could see him."

At all events, she reflected, he had warned her to say nothing and to follow directions. So far she had obeyed the injunctions; here, at least, she was safe. Her instructions informed her that the people in the house were to be trusted. She wondered to what extent she ought to confide in the loquacious woman who had introduced herself as Mrs. Ridder. This mysterious brother Ernst had written her to "Go; and leave no trace." Perhaps he had purposely caused it to be reported that she had perished in the fire. In that case it would be advisable, perhaps, to remain in hiding until she again heard from Ernst. She even questioned the wisdom of using the name "Anna Miller." When Mrs. Ridder brought her breakfast she determined to broach to her some of these perplexing questions.

To her surprise she was treated by Mrs. Ridder with a deference almost akin to awe. "Ain't you and your brother clever, though!" the landlady ejaculated, placing the breakfast-tray on a table. "To think of you two going up there and doing a big piece of work like that. Oh, we'll get them yet—these Yankees; and the best of it is we'll do it through their own invention. The model is already made. They've got it down-stairs. Perhaps you'd like to go down and see it?"

The girl hesitated. "I was going to ask your advice," she commenced; "but perhaps I had better wait until——"

"You've talked with Musine?" interrupted Mrs. Ridder. "Oh, by all means; it wouldn't do at all if you was to talk to us first. He doesn't often come over. Of course, you can understand why it wouldn't be wise for him to be seen coming, but I bet he will, now that you're here." She laughed insinuatingly. "You know him, don't you?"

"No," replied the girl; "I never heard of him before." At which Mrs. Ridder indulged in hearty laughter.

"You certainly can play the innocent," she declared admiringly. "But, say, hadn't we better put whatever valuables you have in the safe—papers and things, you know? It ain't a good plan to have them around loose."

The suggestion seemed wise. "There are not very many," the girl assured her; "just these few thin sheets are marked valuable."

The woman turned them over in her hand. She was plainly consumed with curiosity. "And there was nothing else?" she inquired with some disappointment.

"Nothing that I want to let go out of my possession," answered the girl known to the landlady as Miss Miller. "I've got something here"—indicating a small black box—"but I'd rather keep it right with me."

Mrs. Ridder looked at her suspiciously. "All right," she remarked grudgingly. "Do as you please; but if you get caught you'd be better off not to have anything about you, is my opinion."

She went away with the papers. Her departing words rang in the girl's ears. Their ominous sound terrified her.

How she got through the day she did not know; but when evening came she had a caller. "It's Musine," whispered Mrs. Ridder in a tone indicating that the visitor was one to whom great honor should be paid. "He brought you these flowers." She handed the girl a box of American Beauty roses. "He's down in my rooms in the basement. Shall I tell him you'll be right down?"

During the brief interval that elapsed between Mrs. Ridder's delivery of this message and the appearance of the girl in the basement living-room, the former contrived to impart some warning information.

"I tell you, Herr Musine, that girl's a deep one," she remarked with decision. "I wouldn't trust her too far. She ain't telling all she knows. She's got something back. If she hadn't, why was she afraid to trust me with her

valuables? Maybe it's something she plans to give to you; but if she doesn't, mark my words, you'd better find out. It doesn't do to run any risks these days."

"I think she has been very discreet so far, Mrs. Ridder," Musine replied. "I dare say she does intend to give the valuables you speak of to me. I'll look after them. She seemed a little confused yesterday; didn't appear to have quite so much poise and steadiness of nerve as I had been led to expect, but I fancy it was a rôle she assumed for purposes of protection. In fact, I admired her very much. I think that is she coming now"—he nodded toward the doorway—"so I'll excuse you, Mrs. Ridder. I'll speak with you again before I leave."

Mrs. Ridder curtsied and disappeared through an inner door just as her new lodger entered from the hallway. At sight of Musine the girl paused in astonishment, stepped suddenly back and put her hand on the door-jamb for support.

"You!" she gasped, her face suddenly paling. "I—I thought——"

He came hastily forward. "Please don't be startled, Miss Miller," he begged in a suave tone. "Believe me, I would have made myself known yesterday had I only been sure of your identity. Your brother had never shown me your picture. I had an idea that you resembled him. Your complete dissimilarity was what misled me. I had driven up there for the express purpose of aiding either of you in any way I could."

The color came quickly back into the girl's pale cheeks; her eyes brightened. "Then you can tell me about everything?" she exclaimed questioningly. "What has happened? I am completely dazed. I don't seem to remember anything. Where is Ernst? Why did he send me that message?"

"Message?" repeated Musine, placing a chair for the girl and again seating himself. "Sent you a message? I don't know anything about that. He sent me a message at my summer place, saying you had the papers and that Lester was going to Washington in the morning. That was late in the evening. I was afraid some mishap would occur and I started in my car so you could turn the papers over to me and the better avoid detection yourselves."

She looked at him vaguely. "But why should we be detected?" she persisted. "And where was Ernst when he sent me that warning?"

Little by little the tangle commenced to straighten, and then, just when they seemed to be arriving at a clear understanding, the mystery would deepen again.

"You see," the girl explained, "when I woke up I was just lying there in the shrubbery. I found my suitcase, all right; I must have packed it before the fire, but I can't recollect a single thing about it."

"Had there been any one prowling around the house?" Musine asked. "Any tramps? Maybe you were drugged. Burglars may have ransacked the house and fired it to cover their tracks."

"I don't know," she answered; "but even that solution wouldn't account for Ernst's message to me, which that country boy delivered. If he only could have spoken more English."

"What language did he speak?" Musine seemed suddenly to have arrived at a conclusion. He spoke quicker than was his wont and with a keener look in his dark eyes than usual. A suspicion had crossed his mind that Ernst Miller was not playing fair.

"I didn't recognize it," the girl replied; "but it sounded a little like Swedish, or——"

"Norwegian, I guess," Musine interrupted. "I think I'm beginning to get a line on the situation now. I'm glad you came right here. I'll look into the matter and let you know what I find out. In the meantime you had better give me any valuables you may have. There are some papers, I believe. Mrs. Ridder can get them from the safe. If they are what I think they are you will have rendered your country a great service, Miss Miller." There was an undercurrent to the tone in which the words were uttered which boded ill for the girl should the man's suspicions prove correct.

When Musine said good-night a few moments later, the papers which the inventor, Gerald Lester, had placed in the black bag and which Ernst Miller had later handed to his sister Anna, were in his possession.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE DOUBLE CLUE

NOT more than fifteen minutes after the departure of the train on the Lehigh Valley road still another early morning visitor might have been observed making his way cautiously about The Hermitage grounds. His surprise at finding the inventor's house burned was no less great than that of the two who had preceded him. Instead of hurrying from the scene, however, this man proceeded to make a minute examination not only of the débris but also of the surrounding shrubbery, drives, paths and roads leading to and from the place. Apparently he found much to interest him. Some hours later the utter lack of interesting evidence found by reporters, lawyers, private detectives, country officials and curiosity seekers was a matter of comment.

Among this army of investigators the fact was generally accepted that Gerald Lester and his beautiful daughter had both lost their lives in the fire which had destroyed their home. Ernst and Anna were also supposed to have perished. Accounts of the tragedy were widely published. All were more or less incorrect and composed of statements picked up peacemeal from first one and then another garrulous villager.

To Captain Philip Wiley, just on the eve of sailing for America for an indefinite leave of absence pending his convalescence, the cabled news of his fiancée's death came as a terrible shock. The relapse he suffered confined him to his cabin all the way over. His aunt welcomed him with tears of love and sympathy. Again and again he read Vivian's last letter, in which she expressed her intuitive distrust of her father's servants and prophesied disaster.

"I cannot and will not believe that Vivian is dead," he reiterated. "If we could learn the history of those caretakers it might help us to solve the problem."

"Why not offer a reward?"

The younger Miss Wiley made the suggestion. Her nephew accepted it at once.

"I believe I will," he declared. "If they are really dead it can't do worse than bring us spiritual manifestations, and if they are alive some poor beggar may be in sufficiently dire straits to sell information for a ton of coal or its equivalent."

During the next few days newspapers throughout the country announced that a substantial sum of money would be paid for information regarding Ernst and Anna Miller, recent caretakers on the estate of the late Gerald Lester. As a result of this publicity Captain Philip Wiley received two callers. He looked at the names on the cards which the maid brought him and shook his head. "Mr. Grant Sherwood—Mr. John Ridley," he repeated, in an effort to refresh his memory. "I never heard of them." Nevertheless, he descended to the parlor and courteously greeted the strangers.

Sherwood, speaking for the two, explained their government connection. "We would like to know, captain," he continued, "the nature of your interest in this man Ernst Miller and his sister. We are particularly anxious at present to get a line on the woman."

The young captain grimly stated his rather vague reasons for desiring to learn the whereabouts—whether dead or alive—of the Miller couple. To his surprise and gratification, his auditors did not ridicule nor appear incredulous.

"Would you like to interview Miller?" Sherwood asked.

Captain Wiley's face betokened his amazement. "He is alive? You know where he is?" he asked eagerly. "Well, I wish you'd apprehend him until I can look up his pedigree a little."

"Oh, he's quite safe for the present," answered Ridley with a smile. "I shouldn't be surprised if he'd be rather

glad to talk with you." Noting the captain's mystification, Sherwood courteously explained.

"Ernst Miller is alive. The fire did not occur until after Mr. Ridley, here, had arrested him in the act of sending messages from a wireless station hidden in the woods. We haven't told him yet anything about the fire. Now, our theory is that an associate learned of his arrest, or that some warning was sent and his sister got away with certain secrets of the inventor's that are of incalculable value to the government. More than that, we have got to stop, at all hazards, their being made use of by the enemy."

"Then you want to find the girl, too?"

"She has got to be found."

"Have you any reason for thinking she has these secret papers instead of their being destroyed by the fire?"

"Yes; the wireless message Miller sent has been decoded. The papers at that moment were in her keeping."

Captain Wiley looked grave. "Then she might have had an object in——"

The others nodded in agreement. "The chances are that Mr. Lester discovered his loss. To avoid detection she——"

"Set off the explosives in the laboratory," finished Captain Wiley with decision. "In that case Miss Lester and her father wouldn't have much chance." Weakened by his recent illness, the young man's eyes filled with tears.

"It would seem so," agreed Sherwood; "but Mr. Ridley has a different theory."

Captain Wiley turned questioningly toward Ridley.

"Of course, you understand, captain," Sherwood interpolated before Ridley had time to speak, "that all this is confidential. It would jeopardize your interests as well as ours if any leak occurred. We are not dealing merely with individuals, but with powerful German interests. What we want to do is to round up an entire clique that has been operating from inside civic auxiliary offices and organizations. They've been getting away with murder, or think they have, and we're about ready to close in on them. But this Lester affair has sort of broken in on things. Evidently a cog slipped somewhere. We've got to catch the broken threads and weave them together again."

"Well, when I left the hospital," Captain Wiley replied, "I regretted that I wouldn't be fighting Germans again for quite some time. It begins to look as though I'd be able to do it without having to go to the trenches. If there is any way I can help in this matter you may rely upon me to do it. I'd like to hear Mr. Ridley's theory, if you've no objection."

"It's more than theory," Ridley declared; "it's facts. But there'd be no use in making them public until they could be substantiated. Now, not counting Miller, who was already in custody, I know that at least two people escaped from that house alive."

The convincing tone in which the remark was delivered caused Captain Wiley's face to instantly brighten with hope. "Both of those people were spirited away," Ridley continued. "One of them was able to walk, and did walk barefoot. She discarded a trailing negligée very much torn and blackened, but not burnt, and a hand-embroidered nightgown. She must have suffered some slight injury, probably to her feet, for the gown was torn to bits and had evidently been used for towels and bandages. The sudden shower that came up shortly after midnight was what kept the fire from spreading, but it made the ground pretty wet, and the refugee who ran back and forth from the clump of bushes where she changed her clothes to the edge of the ruins not only got her feet muddy, but left some clear footprints."

"Changed her clothes!" exclaimed Captain Wiley. Sherwood had heard the story before. "Why, how could that be?"

"That's the question. She had help; somebody came to the place in an automobile, but stopped some distance from the house."

"But they would have had to know in order to bring her clothes," interposed Captain Wiley.

"Possibly," admitted Ridley; "but we'll leave that for the present. Since you offered your reward for information regarding the Millers, a farmer's boy up at Mount Forest has come forward with the statement that he saw Anna Miller going toward the Lehigh Valley station the morning after the fire; that she wore a motor cloak and cap and carried a suitcase. You would have heard from the boy by now, for he was particularly anxious to secure the reward, if it hadn't been for one thing."

"What was that?" interposed the captain quickly.

"We locked him up. I brought him to town on the train with me," was the reply. "He doesn't speak much English. It seemed a good idea to let one of our Scandinavian men interview him. He may be able to throw a little more light on the situation."

"But the other one—you say there were two escaped?" Captain Wiley felt the ray of hope that had been kindled momentarily again growing dim.

"The other one must have lain very still, probably unconscious, for the grass by the hedge was dry only in that one spot—you remember it rained in the night—and was lifted up and carried away by some one wearing heavy boots."

The young officer's face paled. "Tramps! Germans!" he ejaculated when Sherwood reassured him, smiling.

"I think Mr. Ridley will vouch for the tramps up in that section," he remarked. "As for the Germans, this isn't Belgium, you know. You forget you're back home. Whoever effected the rescue of refugee number two knew who he was rescuing."

"But, man, what are we sitting here for?" demanded the captain, springing to his feet and as quickly dropping back into his chair with a groan at the pain occasioned by the sudden movement. "We must be doing something. We have got to find her. She may be seriously hurt—dying."

Realizing that young Wiley was still in no condition to stand much excitement, Sherwood and Ridley hastened to dispel his fears.

"There's no occasion for uneasiness," the former told him; "everything indicates that Miss Lester is alive and that we'll find her. But there is another thing that must not be lost sight of. You, as well as we, are in the government service, and the government wants the inventor's secret formula for the greatest invention yet known. That's what the conspirators were after; that's what they've probably got; that's what we've got to find, and after that, Miss Lester."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

IN PERIL

IT was night. Capt. Philip Wiley awakened to find his Aunt Margaret standing by his bedside, speaking his name in a husky whisper. She was in a state of nervous excitement.

"Philip!" she whispered. "I'm so frightened. There's something queer happening in the house next-door. There was a kind of a dynamo going a little while ago. I went down to the kitchen to get a glass of milk and I heard it distinctly. It sounded right through the wall. And yesterday, when your Aunt Lucy was in the store-room, she dropped a heavy crock on the cement floor and it sounded hollow underneath. I'm simply terrified. Do you suppose they might be counterfeiters?"

Though dazed from sleep, the young man tried to calm his aunt's fears. She was insistent. Finally he sat up in bed. "All right, auntie," he remarked. "Just wait a minute outside and I'll go with you down to investigate this mysterious what-you-may-call-it."

"I tell you, I've been suspicious of that house ever since that woman moved in," Miss Wiley whispered through the crack of the door, while her nephew arrayed himself in dressing-gown and slippers. "That woman is one who would hesitate at nothing. And your Aunt Lucy saw her out with a beautiful girl who looked frightened to death."

"When was this?" asked Captain Wiley, at that moment stepping into the hall and starting to descend the stairs.

"Yesterday," repeated Miss Wiley. "The woman kept her eyes on our windows. I think she imagines we watch from behind the curtains."

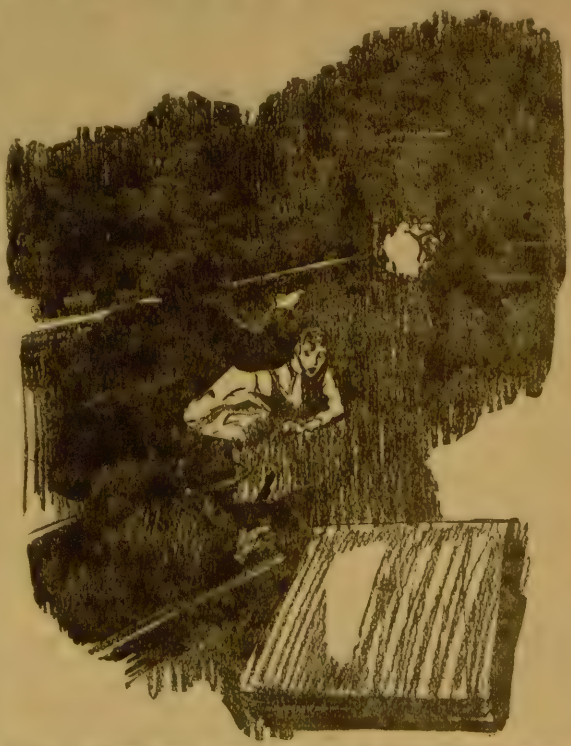
The young officer laughed. "Well, you do, don't you?" he questioned banteringly.

His aunt cautioned him to be silent. "Of course, we do," she whispered. "Your Aunt Lucy has been taking down descriptions of every person who has gone out and in there for weeks. Some day they may come handy. But this girl yesterday must have arrived some time when we were not home, for we hadn't seen her before. She came out with the woman and they both got into a cab. And they both came back in a cab," she concluded," but that was some time afterward."

"Well, what do you think they are doing now, burying the girl under our storeroom?"

"Philip!" exclaimed Miss Wiley, in a shocked tone. "Please don't make such hideous jokes. I'm all of a tremble. Listen! Isn't that a girl's voice—crying?"

For an instant the two stood in strained attitudes, listening intently. "I guess you are right," whispered the young man, softly drawing nearer the brick partition through which the sound came. Handing the electric flashlight which he had used when descending the stairs to his aunt, he slowly, and with some pain, knelt down on the floor, where a large rat-hole had been stopped up with half a bar of soap. Removing the soap and other obstacles, he placed his ear close to the opening. He raised his hand warningly for Miss Wiley to keep silent, and his lips framed some words. She read them accurately.



Dropping the girl, with whom he had been struggling, Musine turned and faced his pursuers. His gun spat venomously.

"You're right. They're speaking German."

In the silence a man's voice could be heard with surprising distinctness. "I tell you the papers are not what we wanted. They're nothing but some kind of a code—and I'm convinced you knew it, too." A girl's voice sobbingly protested. "You've been playing a part to gain time," the man continued, disregarding her words. "Mrs. Ridder suspected you from the very start, but I waited until I had had the very best experts go over these papers a dozen times. To-day they were sent back to me. They're worthless—absolutely worthless, so far as we are concerned. Now, here's the model, as you see it, ready to blow up everything this side of China, and we can't do a thing with it without that secret. Your brother wired me it was in your possession. Now if you haven't got it, I want you to tell me what you've done with it?"

"I can't—oh, I can't," sobbed the girl. "I've told you all I know. If you could only find my brother—or that boy——"

"I'll locate them both in due season," answered the man, who never once raised his voice beyond a suave, cultured tone. "I first wanted to assure myself about these papers. Besides that, I am not able to devote all of my time to these things. I have an official capacity, quite independent of this, which necessity compels me to fill to the satisfaction of the United States government's civilian aides. Otherwise, I would be able to accomplish nothing. But I employed your brother to do this piece of work, and he insisted upon having you assist him. It begins to look as though you both had your own motives."

"If I only could remember——"

"Remember!" The interruption came in the voice of a shrewish woman. "She remembers well enough. It's only pretense. There's a lot of things she pretends and a lot of things that seem queer. What I want to know is, how she could work there when she can't do a thing to help me about the house. Look at her hands. She ain't ever done any work. And yesterday, when I went with her to the matinée, like you told me, she insisted that she lived at——"

"That will do, now, Mrs. Ridder," interposed the man quietly. "I haven't overlooked anything. Our little girl here knows that I admire her very much"—a vain sentimentality creeping into his tone—"and that I don't want to make her any trouble. Those little hands were never made for work. I fancy her brother helped her more than she cares to admit. I don't wonder he wanted her with him. But he's not here now, and I'm going to look after her."

Apparently the speaker approached the girl at this juncture, for she cried out as if in affright: "Don't! Don't touch me. I told you I wouldn't marry you. I—I am afraid of you."

Something in the muffled tones of the girl's voice caused the young man kneeling on the other side of the wall to utter a low exclamation. "How much that sounded like Vivian," he thought, as he shifted to a less painful attitude. But the man to whom the words were addressed seemed roused by them to a degree of vindictiveness almost unbelievable in a person of such calm and polished demeanor.

"So you are afraid of me," he snarled, not loudly, nor harshly, but in a venomous, feline manner. "Why should you be afraid of me if you are who you represent yourself to be, and if you are not hiding something? I am

beginning to think, my young lady, that you are in here for no other purpose than to spy. Now, if that's the case, your life isn't worth a straw."

"Oh, please—please——" wailed the girl. "Won't you believe me? I have told you everything I possibly could. Why should I be a spy? I don't even understand what all this is about. I thought"—she was speaking brokenly through weeping—"that I could trust you here——"

"Then give me that black box which Mrs. Ridder says you refuse to have put in the safe."

"No—oh, no. I couldn't give you that. Please don't ask me." In her terror the girl seemed to run close to the side of the wall where Captain Wiley was kneeling. "I was to keep that—I know I was—it is a secret—he—somebody—told me. I—I must defend it with my life."

Her voice rose to a despairing scream as the man grasped her. "Secret!" he exclaimed. "The secret formula! Heavens, girl, I could kill you for this!" The words were almost hissed. "Give me that box—give it to me, I say——"

At the words "secret formula" Captain Wiley involuntarily brought himself up with a wrench that caused excruciating pain in his wounded leg. The Federal officers had spoken of a missing formula. Was it possible that this—— Another scream from the girl interrupted his brief reflection. This time he felt there could be no mistake.

"Vivi!" he shouted, unconsciously using the pet name by which he had been accustomed to address Vivian. The confusion of voices on the other side of the partition drowned the sound of his own. He flung himself flat on the floor and strove to peer through the tiny aperture from which the ray of light shone, and through which he had been listening. As he did so, he observed a small, dark object fall to the floor. Instantly a cunning hand, slim and well-kept, reached forth and closed over the object.

Before the young officer could regain his feet and dash toward the stairs the words of the Federal officers recurred to him with such force as to bring him suddenly to a halt. He was an officer first, a lover afterward. His country and his sweetheart were both in danger. Neither must be jeopardized. Both must be saved.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE HEIRLOOM

WHEN Lieutenant Musine entered Timothy Clark's office the following morning he appeared more preoccupied than usual. Three times Miss Gottschalk explained a matter regarding certain specifications, and still he failed to comprehend her meaning. His mind, apparently, was concentrated upon some very intricate problem. Pushing the papers aside, he rose from the table at which he had been seated and commenced making preparations to leave for the day.

"If Mr. Clark asks for me," he said, turning to Rudolph, "tell him I had to go out of town to see an inventor. I'll be back to-morrow."

"Yes, sir," answered Rudolph, without raising his eyes from his work of looking over the morning mail. "Is there anything I can do while you're gone?"

After a moment's thought, Musine drew from his pocket a small box, which he handed to the secretary.

"Yes," he observed acridly, "you can take care of that. It's about as useful as those papers we spent so much time on."

Rudolph inspected the box. "Shall I put it in the safe?" he asked.

"I don't care. Hang it around your neck, if you want to," was the unexpected reply. "That's about all it's good for."

The words had been exchanged in low tones. Something rattled in the box as Rudolph moved it. "It's not locked?" he inquired, still with his eyes on the letters before him. "Is it valuable?"

"A blind," answered Musine. "Designed to throw me off. Miller's got the secret. She's shielding him. That Norwegian knows something about it. I'm going to see him."

Musine had no sooner left the room than Rudolph leisurely opened the little box, and at sight of the glittering object it contained involuntarily emitted a low whistle of surprise. Instantly the auburn-haired typist was on her feet.

"Oh, what is it, Rudolph?" she exclaimed eagerly, craning her neck to get a view of that which he held in his hand. "Diamonds! Oh, Willie, come here—Miss Gottschalk—come see what Rudolph's got."

The office boy was already inspecting the emblem. "Gee, that's a peach!" he exclaimed. "What's it for?"

Miss Gottschalk crossed to where the others were standing. "It looks like some kind of a lodge emblem," she remarked. "Is it, Rudolph? It's very beautiful."

Before Rudolph could reply the door of the elevator opened and Timothy Clark entered the room, accompanied by Grant Sherwood.

"Why, what's the matter? What's going on? Somebody's wedding present, eh?" queried Clark as the little group dispersed before him, Miss Gottschalk holding the open box with its dazzling jewels over for his inspection.

"Something of Rudolph's," she replied. "Pretty, isn't it?"

At sight of the emblem the face of Grant Sherwood underwent a sudden change. His mouth set sternly. Clark, smiling genially, turned questioning eyes toward his secretary. In flushed, embarrassed manner Rudolph extended his hand for the box. Clark passed it to Sherwood.

"Mystic emblem?" Sherwood asked, slowly returning the box, as if loath to part with the object it contained.

Rudolph's face crimsoned. "Heirloom," he murmured, closing the box. "Belonged to my grandfather. I'm going to have the stones reset."

"Indeed!" answered Sherwood gravely. "Good idea. I'd like to see it after it is finished. By the way, Mr. Clark," he continued, turning to the office head, at the same time casually noting that Rudolph had placed the box with its jewel in the office safe, "wasn't that your assistant we met down at the door, just as we were coming in?"

"Yes. That was Lieutenant Musine," replied Clark, seating himself at his desk. "I forgot you hadn't met him. When will Lieutenant Musine be back, Rudolph?" turning to his secretary.

The latter rose from before the safe. "He'll not be back to-day, sir," he said. "He has gone out of town to see an inventor."

Sherwood suddenly rose. "I'm sorry, Mr. Clark," he observed, addressing his friend, "but I'm just reminded of an important matter that must be looked after at once. If you'll excuse me, I'll run out and attend to it, and—I'd like to have you lunch with me, if you can. Suppose we meet at Haan's, say, in about an hour."

Clark readily agreed, and Sherwood hurried away. Ten minutes later several men might have been seen hurrying in various directions in obedience to certain telephonic communications which each had received.

Captain Philip Wiley, en route to Sherwood's office, met the latter at the entrance of a government building. Together they rode up in the elevator. Sherwood listened to the young officer's recital with interest.

"That certainly helps considerably," he observed. "I'm glad you didn't do anything rash. We've had that house covered for some time. You may be right about the girl. One of our men, the one who shadowed Miller before he left New York, described a blonde woman who visited him and with whom he took dinner just before going to the train. We've located that blonde woman. She resembles Miller. The chances are she is his sister. Now your aunt describes this girl she saw next door as beautiful, frightened-looking and a brunette. Miss Lester was a brunette. But here we run up against a stone wall.

"What would Miss Lester be doing in that nest of copperheads? What object would she have? If, as you

heard, she had her father's valuable formula with her, why should she deliberately take it into the very hands of the enemy? And, then, again——"

The door opened and Ridley entered.

"Sorry to interrupt you, Mr. Sherwood," he said, after greeting Captain Wiley, "but the men are stationed. Is it all right to let Miller start?"

Sherwood glanced at his watch. "Yes," he answered. "Have Brown go with him until he gets to Mount Forest, then let him loose. Don't tell him about the fire."

Ridley went out. "We're letting Miller out on parole," Sherwood explained to Wiley. "He'll find his sister for us. I think if you can be patient for a few hours now, and keep a sharp lookout from your aunt's home, we'll be able to corral the entire bunch."

"But Miss Lester——" nervously commenced Captain Wiley.

"Miss Lester will not be harmed so long as they are ignorant, as they seem to be, as to her real identity," replied Sherwood. "By the time they discover that we'll be ready for them."

Explaining that he had an appointment, Sherwood excused himself from further conversation, urging upon his caller the importance of quietness and patience.

Timothy Clark met Sherwood at Haan's restaurant, and by the end of the meal the former's cheerful, rubicund face was very grave.

"I'm appalled, Sherwood. Simply appalled," he said, "at what you've told me. I still hope that further investigation will reveal that it is all a mistake. Of course, I've got absolute confidence in you. I'll do my part, you may rest assured of that. Here's the combination." He wrote something on a slip of paper and handed it to Sherwood. "You're positive it is Lester's?" he asked, after a moment.

Sherwood smiled grimly. "I was present at the presentation," he replied. "The setting is unique. I helped design it."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

WHO IS SHE?

ERNST MILLER breathed a sigh of relief as he stepped from the train at the Lehigh Valley station.

"I'm going on up the road—several stations beyond," his companion, the Federal agent who had assisted at his arrest, had told him as they rode in the train together. "You're mighty lucky to get off so easily. You want to take care that we don't catch you again." He laughed, and Miller had sullenly bade him good-by.

"I'll see him cursed first," Miller muttered to himself, apropos of the man's final admonition. "When he catches me again he'll know it. What I can't see is, why they insisted upon bringing me back here? Why couldn't they have let me go in New York. I wanted to see Musine."

As if in answer to his unspoken desire, a gray racing-car at that moment bore down upon him and suddenly slowed up. To his amazement, the man driving the car was Musine. Musine recognized him at the same moment. The car came to a halt. Miller hurried forward. Musine drew a revolver.

"What's that for?" exclaimed Miller, surprised at the action as well as the dark look on Musine's face.

"Simply that I don't want any more trickery," replied Musine. "You may think you are clever, but you should know better than to try to play against me."

"What the devil are you talking about?" cried Miller angrily. "Who has been playing against you? I haven't heard a word since the night I wired you. Before I could finish the message the Federal agents were raiding the place. I did the best I could, but the odds were against me. They took me away. I tried to get a message to Anna. Don't know whether it reached her or not. Have you seen her? Did she give you the papers?"

"Get up here in the car," Musine remarked shortly. "Yes, she gave me the papers," he replied. "And they're worthless. A lot of rot. Either you were fooled or you are still trying to fool me. What is the matter with your sister, anyway? Why did she want to act that way about the little box? What have you said to her to poison her mind against me?"

Miller looked blank. "I don't understand——" he commenced.

Musine interrupted. "Now I've had enough of this. She says you sent her a message written on a fruit box. That a boy who couldn't speak English brought it."

"Yes," assented Miller. "That's right. I did, and a devil of a time I had doing it, too."

"Was it Lindstrom's boy?"

"Yes."

"I thought it was. I'm going to see him."

For a few moments the two rode together in angry silence. Musine spoke first.

"Your sister is a beautiful girl, Miller."

"Yes," dryly.

"Plays the piano beautifully. How did she manage to keep her hands in such condition while you were up here? Did you do the work?"

"Play the piano? Beautiful hands?" repeated Miller. "Anna doesn't play the piano. And cook—mein Gott! If there is anything Anna can't cook, I'd like to know it."

Musine turned and faced Miller so suddenly that the racing-car almost shot over the side of the road.

"Is that true?" he exclaimed.

"Of course it's true."

Musine stared. "Well, the girl at Mrs. Ridder's, the girl who says she received your message—and, by the way, Miller, she doesn't look anything like you—plays classical music and can't boil an egg, so Mrs. Ridder says."

It was Miller's turn to be astonished. "Anna is my twin," he observed. "She looks younger, though. Otherwise we resemble one another closely."

Musine then related more details. "At all events," he concluded, "whoever she is, she can't do any harm so long as Mrs. Ridder is looking after her. She had hysteria last night, and we locked her in the basement. No one can hear her down there. Mrs. Ridder mistrusted her from the first. I can't understand why she should have been so crazy about that box with the mystic emblem in it."

Before Miller could voice the inquiry which rose to his lips they arrived at the home of the Norwegian truck farmer. Lindstrom himself was not at home, his wife said. He had gone off with some gentlemen two days before. Musine asked for the boy. He too had vanished.

"What we want is some information about Anna Miller," Musine explained. "This gentleman is her brother. He has been away. He didn't know until to-day that there had been a fire. He gave a message to your farm boy to deliver to his sister. Now we want to find the boy."

The woman's face relaxed somewhat. The apparent fear and distrust of her visitors vanished. To Miller, whose knowledge of Norwegian had already stood him in good stead, she explained that his sister was quite recovered.

"Recovered!" exclaimed Miller. "Was she hurt?"

"Not badly burned," the woman explained, "but her head was hurt and one of her ankles wrenched. She was unconscious when my husband found her," she continued, "and he brought her right here. When she came to she said it would be best for folks to think she had been lost in the fire. And then, when the boy came and said he had given Mr. Miller's message to a lady who said she was Miss Miller, we told him to go get the reward. Your sister said that would turn any suspicion there was away from her and you. She thought you had something to do with the fire."

"But where is she now?" both men asked impatiently. "If she is here, we want to see her."

Again Mrs. Lindstrom grew manifestly nervous. "It was the government agents, we think—we don't know," she whispered. "They came to see my husband, and when he went out to talk with them, had him get right into the automobile with them and drive away. He never came back into the house, nor anything. And the boy, he disappeared the very day he went to the village to

ask about that reward. So Miss Miller, she got better and she thought it wasn't best for her to wait here, so——"

"Yes—yes—go on," urged Musine, as Mrs. Lindstrom paused to pull a loaf of bread from the oven.

"She slipped away on the early train this morning. I think she went to Brooklyn. She said she lost all her papers when she threw her traveling-bag out the window. She went back to get her brother's things, that's how she happened to be in the house when the explosion occurred."

"Then that's how——" Miller commenced, when Musine interrupted.

"Where was she going in Brooklyn? Did she give you any address?" he queried.

"She didn't mention the address," Mrs. Lindstrom replied. "She said it was a place you told her about where she would be safe and where her brother's friends were well known."

With one accord the two men turned toward the door. "We'd better get back there as quick as we can," Musine remarked, nervously stroking his beard. "Thank you, Mrs. Lindstrom. Here's something for your kindness to Miss Miller." He pressed a bank-note into the woman's hand and hurried after Ernst, who was already taking his seat in the racing-car.

As they sped off down the road a bush near by was cautiously parted, and Miller's late traveling companion, who had escorted him from New York, ran rapidly in the direction of the railway station.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

CLARK'S SAFE LOOTED

SOME time that night while the racing-car bearing Musine and Miller was making its way back toward the former's summer home, from which the two would take the train for the city, crooks must have effected an entrance to Timothy Clark's office and rifled his safe.

The discovery was made by Willie, the office boy, closely followed by Rudolph, when they arrived at the office in the morning. Fortunately for Mr. Clark, nothing of value was taken, but the little black box containing the heirloom belonging to Rudolph's grandfather was missing.

Mr. Clark, who had planned to leave for Washington, deferred his trip. Because of Rudolph's loss, he was given the afternoon off to make whatever arrangements he desired for the recovery of the emblem. Timothy Clark was always very thoughtful to his employees.

It was late when Musine arrived. The commuter's train which brought him had been delayed by a wreck. Miller, who came to the city by the same train, did not board it when Musine did. Neither did they sit together. When they had parted, some hours previous, Musine's last words had been to urge caution.

"Don't go near the house until night," he had said. "I've telephoned Mrs. Ridder to keep the girl in the basement and not to let her talk to any one until I come. Use your own judgment about how much to tell—or to have Mrs. Ridder tell your sister. It really isn't necessary for anything to be explained to your sister until we get there. Telephones are not safe. You can depend upon Mrs. Ridder to follow directions."

Therefore Miller, with some hours at his disposal, and seeking relaxation after the nervous strain which he had undergone, started for the Strand Theater, and at the ticket window came face to face with Rudolph.

"Have you seen Musine?" were the latter's first words, spoken softly, as he and Miller entered the lobby together.

Miller nodded. "Just came in with him," he replied. "Haven't you seen him?"

"Clark sent me out to hunt up some detectives," replied Rudolph. "The safe was rifled last night. I can't do anything till I see Musine. I said it was my loss, but it wasn't. I guess you're as much interested in it as any one. It's the little satin-lined box with the mystic emblem—the one your sister had."

For the second time that box had been mentioned. "That girl isn't my sister," Miller declared. "She's an impostor. We've no idea who she is. Musine thinks she is a Federal spy. I don't know what to think. If she is, she's got to be put out of the way, that's all. She has seen the model, Musine says."

"Well, that jeweled emblem she had must be worth some money. She wouldn't give up the box. Musine took it from her last night. He thought it contained the formula; but it didn't. There was nothing there but some kind of a jeweled lodge emblem. Something mystic—a secret order, you know, or something like that."

Miller caught Rudolph's coat and whirled him about so suddenly that his downcast eyes for a moment opened wide. "Wasn't there something in the papers about Lester's daughter?" he asked hoarsely. "I haven't seen any accounts of the fire. I only know what Musine told me, and that wasn't much."

"Come on down to a box," Rudolph answered. "We can talk better there. Yes," he continued, after they had taken seats in a box where they were alone, "Miss Lester was said to have gone to The Hermitage that evening, just a few hours before the fire. She is supposed to have been burned to death."

"So was I," answered Miller gruffly. "So was my sister. But we weren't. Now I wonder—does Musine know about the theft of that emblem?" he asked suddenly.

"No. I haven't had a chance to tell him. He hadn't come in yet when Clark sent me out," Rudolph explained.

"You better come down to the house with me after it gets dark," Miller suggested. "Musine is to meet me there. My sister is there, and we are going to find out who this mysterious person is. It's going to be a pretty interesting session."

"Sounds like it," answered Rudolph. "Sure, I'll go. Wouldn't miss it for a farm."

Some hours later the two were admitted at the basement door of Mrs. Ridder's house in Brooklyn. Mrs. Ridder recognized Miller at once. She was profuse, abject, servile in her apologies for ever having admitted a stranger in mistake for his sister. Her rage against the impostor was unutterable.

"You see, Mr. Miller," she kept repeating, "this was the letter she gave me. You can see for yourself that it is all right. She produced the letter of introduction which guaranteed the bearer to be loyal and discreet. And there's your own sister a-waiting for you up in the first floor back, just the very image of yourself, and to think if you hadn't sent me that telephone yesterday, I wouldn't have believed her when she came. Just you and Mr. Rudolph sit right down and I'll fetch Miss Anna, your sister, down to you. Her ankle is a little weak yet. I'll help her down the stairs."

Ten minutes later Anna Miller and her brother were deep in conversation, with Mrs. Ridder and Rudolph as interested auditors. Anna was emphatic in her statement that Mr. Lester's daughter had not arrived at The Hermitage.

"If she had reached there, I would have known it," she declared. "I had been busy packing all evening. I was just beginning to feel a little anxious about your long absence when I guess I must have dozed off, for I was lying on the sofa, under the windows. When I awoke the electric bells were ringing and the rooms were filled with smoke. I was not a bit frightened, for I had everything packed, all ready to go to the train, so I just hurled my bags out of the window at the back of the house and ran into your room. I had left your things for you to pack, and while I was stuffing them into your traveling-bags the smoke got so thick that I realized it was dangerous to wait. I couldn't get back into my room again, so I ran to the window of your room. That was at the side of the house, you know, right over the laboratory. Then I remembered about the explosives there, and I sprang into the window with the intention of jumping, when suddenly there was an explosion and I felt myself whirling through

space. The next thing I knew I was in bed and Mrs. Lindstrom was bathing my face. Because we couldn't find out anything about you, and after the papers had so much to say the next day, we decided that the best thing to do was to keep quiet and let them think we were all dead. When there was a reward offered I was puzzled. I don't understand that yet."

"Neither do I," answered Ernst. "I wish Musine would hurry and get here. The sooner we get this solved the better. We may all be risking our liberty by waiting."

At that moment Musine rang for admittance.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

SOLVED AT LAST

ALL day the home of the Misses Wiley had been a scene of preparations for some social entertainment. Nothing else could have accounted for so much unwonted animation at that usually quiet residence. As soon as dusk fell it was brilliantly illumined. Several cabs drove up bringing parties of men and women in evening dress. Others arrived alone and by twos. The women were in the minority. Captain Wiley himself received the guests.

"The house is at your disposal," he remarked, as he greeted the two men who were the first to arrive. "I had the ice-cream freezers put in the basement. They are easy of access. I think you'll find everything you need in them."

The men thanked him. One was Grant Sherwood.

"Did your caterers get the dictagraph fixed, and the decorators manage the drilling without inconveniencing you very much?" he asked.

"Everything worked well," answered the captain. "They've had her locked up all day in the basement. It has been distressing to hear her sobbing, but——"

"That is probably only hysteria," said Sherwood, in a reassuring tone. "Now I want to get a couple of men into that underground passageway as quick as possible. Everything is all fixed across the street. You say the scuttle is all clear to the roof?"

"Nothing in the way. We never use it."

"We will probably not have to use it, but it is just as well to be prepared." Sherwood turned to the parlor, where the Miss Wileys were making their feminine guests comfortable. "Now, remember," he admonished, "you Red Cross nurses have got to keep your heads and not do any fainting if there should happen to be casualties. Don't be in the least uneasy, Miss Wiley. There will be no publicity. When the caterer's wagon drives up you will see the last of your undesirable neighbors."

"I hope so," faltered the elder Miss Wiley.

"So do I," echoed her sister.

The men disappeared into the basement. Very carefully they raised a section of the store-room flooring and peered down into the blackness below. All was still.

"I'll go first," whispered Wiley, but Sherwood pushed him back.

"Not now," he warned. "Ridley is going first."

With marvelous caution and agility Ridley lowered himself into the passageway which had been disclosed running underneath the Wiley homestead. Sherwood, a bigger man, had more difficulty in getting through the aperture. "Wait," he said to the impatient army officer who chaffed at being compelled to remain behind. "We want to reconnoiter first. Keep the store-room dark, so if any one comes through after us, they will not discover where we effected our entrance."

They slipped away into the darkness, going not in the direction of Mrs. Ridder's house, but toward the large warehouse which had been erected on the opposite side of the Wiley residence. After going some few yards they paused and listened. There was no sound. Very cautiously Ridley flashed his electric searchlight around the warehouse in which they were emerging.

"Sugar!" he whispered, pointing to the barrels ranged on all sides. "Look at it."

"May not all be sugar," answered Sherwood. "Aren't those benches over there?" pointing to a far corner. "They must have had some secret meetings. There's a workshop in here somewhere. Be careful where you go. Don't touch anything."

With redoubled caution they continued their way until they reached the doors opening to the street. One glance and Sherwood gave up the idea of unfastening them. "Try the window," he directed.

Ridley examined the window. "I can unbolt this one," he said. "What was to be Brown's signal?"

"One flash. Not more. Mustn't risk it."

With what in the stillness sounded like a terrific creaking, the heavy shutter over the window swung open. One brief flicker of the searchlight Ridley carried gleamed against the window and as quickly disappeared. Then the two men started back through the tunnel.

As they neared the opening through which they had made their entrance voices sounded. The two men pressed close to the sides of the wall and hardly breathed, lest their presence be discovered. But the speakers did not come in their direction. Instead a key turned in a lock and a door was opened. Some one must have pressed an electric light switch, for on the instant the whole place became brilliantly illumined.

Sherwood muttered an exclamation. "Get your revolver ready," he whispered.

But the people, whose voices could be heard distinctly, were apparently not within sight of the subterranean passage. Their attention seemed concentrated within the room just opened.

"There she is—that's the girl, Miss Miller, who said she was you and who gave me the letter."

The strident voice of Mrs. Ridder echoed through the cavernous basement. During the moment of silence which ensued it was evident that the two Anna Millers were gazing fixedly at one another."

"I never saw her before in my life!" exclaimed the real Anna Miller. "But that is my dress she is wearing. She must be a thief—look at all her rings."

"Well, whoever she is, she has got to give an account of herself now," interrupted the suave, well-modulated voice of Musine. "This is not a time for subterfuge. Now, young lady, are you or are you not a Federal spy?"

"I don't know—I tell you I don't know——" implored a girl's voice, weakened by weeping. "Won't you please let me go away from here?"

Ernst Miller stepped forward. "Are you Miss Lester?" he asked abruptly, in a tone intended to terrify. "Because if you are, we're going to kill you."

A low moaning cry broke from the girl. "But why am I not Anna Miller?" she again protested. "Who else could I be? How do you know that she is Anna Miller and I am not??

"Dippy, isn't she?" The voice was Rudolph's. "Ask her about 'my grandfather's heirloom.'" The heirloom idea which had so unexpectedly secured for him a day's holiday seemed to please the young man immensely.

"Yes, I want to know about that, too," broke in Ernst Miller. "If that was the same one which I saw old man Lester put into his bag to take to Washington, then you are either a thief or his daughter. You know altogether too much as it is, and the sooner you stop this fool camouflage the better."

"Why do you bother any more with her? Why not take her right over there in the warehouse and stop her noise? It's either her life or ours, you know."

Mrs. Ridder made the suggestion with the cold-blooded tone of a German butcher asking whether a patron would like to see the fowl he had ordered slaughtered in order to be sure it was fresh-killed.

"Not till we get that secret formula," declared Musine. "I've got everything else. You took the drawings, didn't you, Rudolph? Here's the model. And now——" he went toward the girl, evidently, for she again attempted to scream. Her cry was stifled.

"For heaven's sake, Sherwood, do something!"

The hoarse whisper came from over the heads of the two unseen auditors. The voice was Captain Wiley's.

"Sh!" warned Ridley.

As the silencing hand was removed from the girl's mouth she broke forth in a sudden torrent of words. Fright and anger stimulated her to vehemence.

"I tell you, once and for all, I don't remember," she cried. "I call myself Anna Miller because I don't know who else I can be. When I woke up there in the bushes I couldn't remember anything—not anything—except—that I must keep something valuable that was worth more than life. And—you—you took it from me. It's—it's——"

Suddenly, with a cry of utter horror, the girl sprang past her tormentors and through the doorway. "I know you now—I know you now!" she cried. "I don't know who I am, but you—you are the paragons—the saints—I am afraid of you—let me get away—let me get away!"

"Vivian—Vivian!" Captain Wiley shouted the words, but the girl did not hear them. She did not turn down the passageway where Sherwood and Ridley were stationed, but ran back toward the stairs leading to the upper part of the house. After her ran her inquisitors. And close upon their heels came Sherwood and Ridley, guns in hand.

"I hope Brown saw that signal," panted Sherwood, as they bounded up the stairs.

At that moment terrified screams and exclamations sounded overhead. Back down the stairs came Ernst and Anna Miller, followed by Rudolph and Mrs. Ridder. Sherwood glanced around. Brown had seen the signal. Through the passageway from the warehouse reinforcements were arriving. Miller was the first to fire a shot. Ridley's revolver answered. More Federal officers rushed down the stairs to meet them.

"Run back; tell Wiley to get to the roof and take his men with him; there are half a dozen other aliens on the upper floors in this house," called Sherwood.

"Federal officers!" shrieked Mrs. Ridder, in defiance. "You think you're smart, but you're not. You'll not get the girl; you're not clever enough." She hurled a chair down the stairs at the approaching officers.

"The roof—the roof!" shouted Ridley to Captain Wiley, as the latter, disregarding all orders, was fast coming down into the mêlée. They've escaped by way of the roof."

The young officer sprang toward the stairs. Half a dozen of the seeming guests who had been waiting on the parlor floor followed close at his heels. They reached the upper floor. On up the narrow stairs leading toward the scuttle Captain Wiley could plainly hear Vivian screaming from the house adjoining. He pushed against the scuttle door. It refused to give. Others helped him. Still the door did not budge.

Footsteps sounded without. "Vivian—Vivian!" called the captain, cold perspiration breaking out upon his forehead as he struggled with the door.

"It must be fastened down on the outside!" exclaimed one of the men farther down the stairs. "Do you suppose she'll jump?"

Again Wiley called Vivian by name. He thought he heard her reply. The next instant, however, he realized that Musine had overtaken her. for the man's voice sounded distinctly.

"Now, I'm going to throw you down from this roof unless you will give me your word that you will come with me, as I asked you. You are Miss Lester. You know too much. I don't want to kill you. I want to marry you. You know where that secret formula is. Together we will be rich, and we'll leave this country forever!"

Captain Wiley pushed madly at the trap-door. It seemed to give ever so little. "Help me here," he urged to those beside him. Together they exerted their strength and the door flew open with a suddenness that precipitated them well after it.

Dropping the girl with whom he had been struggling, Musine turned and faced his pursuers. His gun spat venomously. He dashed wildly toward the secret entrance on the roof of the warehouse beyond, but turned at sight of the Federal officers already emerging from it. Fleeing back to the house from which he had just escaped, he was met by Sherwood, revolver in hand.

"Give me your gun," demanded Sherwood.

Musine handed it over.

"Now, forward march. Hands up, you know."

Musine obeyed.

Straight across the roof they marched to where Captain Wiley stood clasping Vivian in his arms. The girl was weeping softly, but happily, as he supported her.

"She knows me!" exclaimed Wiley to Sherwood. "She is all right. She remembers everything now. But she says you must get back the emblem—her father's mystic emblem."

"I know all about that," said Sherwood, with a grim look at Musine. "Here, you candidate for the iron cross, I want you to see this." And before their astonished eyes he produced the little satin-lined box from his pocket, opened it, and held the mystic emblem before them. "Come here with that flashlight, Ridley," he ordered. The latter obeyed.

"Now," continued Sherwood, taking up the glittering jewel and gently turning it over in his hand, "I want to show you what Miss Lester has so faithfully protected." Touching a secret spring, he opened the back of the emblem and slowly drew forth a small, thin piece of parchment.

"The secret formula!" exclaimed Captain Wiley, in amazement.

"Which Lieutenant Musine promised to the German government," added Grant Sherwood. "Fortunately, I knew the secret of this mystic emblem and he did not. In it the inventor placed his trust. That trust was not misplaced. It brings you happiness in life, and gives him honor in death. The subconscious mind of Miss Lester has saved to the United States the most wonderful invention in the world." Removing the parchment, he extended the emblem toward her. "Through the medium of that invention this entire gang of conspirators has been rounded up. March on, Musine. You will find your compatriots awaiting you downstairs at the door of the caterer's wagon."

Captain Wiley stooped and kissed the face of the girl who had so nearly been wrested from him. "A mystic emblem for a coat-of-arms," he suggested.

"For a symbol of love," she whispered. "That is a mystery none can solve."

THE SUICIDE OF KIAROS

By L. FRANK BAUM

I

MR. FELIX MARSTON, cashier for the great mercantile firm of Van Alsteyne & Traynor, sat in his little private office with a balance-sheet before him and a frown upon his handsome face. At times he nervously ran his slim fingers through the mass of dark hair that clustered over his forehead, and the growing expression of annoyance upon his features fully revealed his disquietude.

The world knew and admired Mr. Marston, and a casual onlooker would certainly have decided that something had gone wrong with the firm's financial transactions, but Mr. Marston knew himself better than the world did, and grimly realized that, although something had gone very wrong indeed, it affected himself in an unpleasantly personal way.

"The amount is, I believe, correct," said Kiaros, after a second count.

The world's knowledge of the popular young cashier included the following items: He had entered the firm's employ years before in an inferior position, and by energy, intelligence and business ability had worked his way up until he reached the post he now occupied, and became his employers' most trusted servant. His manner was grave, earnest and dignified; his judgment, in business matters, clear and discerning. He had no intimate friends, but was courteous and affable to all he met, and his private life, so far as it was known, was beyond all reproach. Mr. Van Alsteyne, the head of the firm, conceived a warm liking for Mr. Marston, and finally invited him to dine at his house. It was there the young man first met Gertrude Van Alsteyne, his employer's only child, a beautiful girl and an acknowledged leader in society. Attracted by the man's handsome face and gentlemanly bearing, the heiress encouraged him to repeat his visit, and Marston followed up his advantage so skillfully that within a year she had consented to become his wife. Mr. Van Alsteyne did not object to the match. His admiration for the young man deepened, and he vowed that upon the wedding-day he would transfer one-half his interest in the firm to his son-in-law.

Therefore the world, knowing all this, looked upon Mr. Marston as one of fortune's favorites, and predicted a great future for him. But Mr. Marston, as I said, knew himself more intimately than did the world, and now, as he sat looking upon that fatal trial balance, he muttered in an undertone:

"Oh, you fool—you fool!"

Clear-headed, intelligent man of the world though he was, one vice had mastered him. A few of the most secret but most dangerous gambling dens knew his face well. His ambition was unbounded, and before he had even dreamed of being able to win Miss Van Alsteyne as his bride, he had figured out several ingenious methods of winning a fortune at the green table. Two years before he had found it necessary to "borrow" a sum of money from the firm to enable him to carry out these clever methods. Having, through some unforeseen calamity, lost the money, another sum had to be abstracted to allow him to win back enough to even the accounts. Other men have attempted this before; their experiences are usually the same. By a neat juggling of figures, the books of the firm had so far been made to conceal his thefts, but now it seemed as if fortune, in pushing him forward, was about to hurl him down a precipice.

His marriage to Gertrude Van Alsteyne was to take place in two weeks, and as Mr. Van Alsteyne insisted upon keeping his promise to give Marston an interest in the business, the change in the firm would necessitate a thorough overhauling of the accounts, which meant discovery and ruin to the man who was about to grasp a fortune and a high social position—all that his highest ambition had ever dreamed of attaining.

It is no wonder that Mr. Marston, brought face to face with his critical position, denounced himself for his past folly, and realized his helplessness to avoid the catastrophe that was about to crush him.

A voice outside interrupted his musings and arrested his attention.

"It is Mr. Marston I wish to see."

The cashier thrust the sheet of figures within a drawer of the desk, hastily composed his features and opened the glass door beside him.

"Show Mr. Kiaros this way," he called, after a glance at his visitor. He had frequently met the person who now entered his office, but he could not resist a curious glance as the man sat down upon a chair and spread his hands over his knees. He was short and thick-set in form, and both oddly and carelessly dressed, but his head and face were most venerable in appearance. Flowing locks of pure white graced a forehead whose height and symmetry denoted unusual intelligence, and a full beard of the same purity reached full to his waist. The eyes were full and dark, but not piercing in character, rather conveying in their frank glance kindness and benevolence. A round cap of some dark material was worn upon his head, and this he deferentially removed as he seated himself, and said:

"For me a package of value was consigned to you, I believe?"

Marston nodded gravely.

"Mr. Williamson left it with me," he replied.

"I will take it," announced the Greek, calmly; "twelve thousand dollars it contains."

Marston started.

"I knew it was money," he said, "but was not aware of the amount. This is it, I think." He took from the huge safe a packet, corded and sealed, and handed it to his visitor. Kiaros took a pen-knife from his pocket, cut the cords and removed the wrapper, after which he proceeded to count the contents.

Marston listlessly watched him. Twelve thousand dollars. That would be more than enough to save him from ruin, if only it belonged to him instead of this Greek money-lender.

"The amount, it is right," declared the old man, rewrapping the parcel of notes; "you have my thanks, sir. Good afternoon," and he rose to go.

"Pardon me, sir," said Marston, with a sudden thought, "it is after banking hours. Will it be safe to carry this money with you until morning?"

"Perfectly," replied Kiaros; "I am never molested, for I am old, and few know my business. My safe at home large sums often contains. The money I like to have near me, to accommodate my clients."

He buttoned his coat tightly over the packet, and then in turn paused to look at the cashier.

"Lately you have not come to me for favors," he said.

"No," answered Marston, arousing from a slight reverie; "I have not needed to. Still, I may be obliged to visit you again soon."

"Your servant I am pleased to be," said Kiaros, with a smile, and turning abruptly he left the office.

Marston glanced at his watch. He was engaged to dine with his betrothed that evening, and it was nearly time to return to his lodgings to dress. He attended to one or two matters in his usual methodical way, and then left the office for the night, relinquishing any further duties to his assistant. As he passed through the various business offices on his way out, he was greeted respectfully by his fellow-employees, who already regarded him a member of the firm.

II

Almost for the first time during their courtship, Miss Van Alsteyne was tender and demonstrative that evening, and seemed loath to allow him to leave the house when he pleaded a business engagement and arose to go. She was a stately beauty, and little given to emotional ways, therefore her new mood affected him greatly, and as he walked away he realized, with a sigh, how much it would cost him to lose so dainty and charming a bride.

At the first corner he paused and examined his watch by the light of the street lamp. It was nine o'clock. Hailing the first passing cab, he directed the man to drive him to the lower end of the city, and leaning back upon the cushions, he became occupied in earnest thought.

The jolting of the cab over a rough pavement finally aroused him, and looking out he signaled the driver to stop.

"Shall I wait, sir?" asked the man, as Marston alighted and paid his fare.

"No."

The cab rattled away, and the cashier retraced his way a few blocks and then walked down a side street that seemed nearly deserted, so far as he could see in the dim light. Keeping track of the house numbers, which were infrequent and often nearly obliterated, he finally paused before a tall, brick building, the lower floors of which seemed occupied as a warehouse.

"Two-eighty-six," he murmured; "this must be the place. If I remember right, there should be a stairway at the left—ah, here it is."

There was no light at the entrance, but having visited the place before, under similar circumstances, Marston did not hesitate, but began mounting the stairs, guiding himself in the darkness by keeping one hand upon the narrow rail. One flight—two—three—four!

"His room should be straight before me," he thought, pausing to regain his breath; "yes, I think there is a light shining under the door."

He advanced softly, knocked, and then listened. There was a faint sound from within, and then a slide in the upper panel of the door was pushed aside, permitting a strong ray of lamp-light to strike Marston full in the face.

"Oho!" said a calm voice, "Mr. Marston has honored me. To enter I entreat you."

The door was thrown open and Kiaros stood before him, with a smile upon his face, gracefully motioning him to advance. Marston returned the old man's courteous bow, and entering the room, took a seat near the table, at the same time glancing at his surroundings.

The room was plainly but substantially furnished. A small safe stood in a corner at his right, and near it was the long table, used by Kiaros as a desk. It was littered with papers and writing material, and behind it was a high-backed, padded easy-chair, evidently the favorite seat of the Greek, for after closing the door he walked around the table and sat within the big chair, facing his visitor.

The other end of the room boasted a fire-place, with an old-fashioned mantel bearing an array of curiosities. Above it was a large clock, and at one side stood a small book-case containing a number of volumes printed in the Greek language. A small alcove, containing a couch, occupied the remaining side of the small apartment, and it was evident these cramped quarters constituted Kiaros' combined office and living rooms.

"So soon as this I did not expect you," said the old man, in his grave voice.

"I am in need of money," replied Marston, abruptly, "and my interview this afternoon reminded me that you have sometimes granted me an occasional loan. Therefore, I have come to negotiate with you."

Kiaros nodded, and studied with his dark eyes the composed features of the cashier.

"A satisfactory debtor you have ever proved," said he,

"and to pay me with promptness never failed. How much do you require?"

"Twelve thousand dollars."

In spite of his self-control, Kiaros started as the young man coolly stated this sum.

"Impossible!" he ejaculated, moving uneasily in his chair.

"Why is it impossible?" demanded Marston. "I know you have the money."

"True; I deny it not," returned Kiaros, dropping his gaze before the other's earnest scrutiny; "also to lend money is my business. But see—I will be frank with you, Mr. Marston—I cannot take the risk. You are cashier for hire; you have no property; security for so large a sum you cannot give. Twelve thousand dollars! It is impossible!"

"You loaned Williamson twelve thousand," persisted Marston, doggedly.

"Mr. Williamson secured me."

Marston rose from his chair and began slowly pacing up and down before the table, his hands clasped tightly behind him and an impatient frown contracting his features. The Greek watched him calmly.

"Perhaps you have not heard, Mr. Kiaros," he said, at length, "that within two weeks I am to be married to Mr. Van Alsteyne's only daughter."

"I had not heard."

"And at the same time I am to receive a large interest in the business as a wedding gift from my father-in-law."

"To my congratulations you are surely entitled."

"Therefore my need is only temporary. I shall be able to return the money within thirty days, and I am willing to pay you well for the accommodation."

"A usurer I am not," returned Kiaros, with a slight shrug, "and where I lend I do not rob. But so great a chance I cannot undertake. You are not yet married, a partner in the firm not yet. To die, to quarrel with the lady, to lose Mr. Van Alsteyne's confidence, would leave me to collect the sum wholly unable. I might a small amount risk—the large amount is impossible."

Marston suddenly became calm, and resumed his chair with a quiet air, to Kiaros' evident satisfaction.

"You have gambled?" asked the Greek, after a pause.

"Not lately. I shall never gamble again. I owe no gambling debts; this money is required for another purpose."

"Can you not do with less?" asked Kiaros; "an advance I will make of one thousand dollars; not more. That sum is also a risk, but you are a man of discretion; in your ability I have confidence."

Marston did not reply at once. He leaned back in his chair, and seemed to be considering the money-lender's offer. In reality there passed before his mind the fate that confronted him, the scene in which he posed as a convicted felon; he saw the collapse of his great ambitions, the ruin of those schemes he had almost brought to fruition. Already he felt the reproaches of the man he had robbed, the scorn of the proud woman who had been ready to give him her hand, the cold sneers of those who gloated over his downfall. And then he bethought himself, drove the vision away, and thought of other things.

Kiaros rested his elbow upon the table and toyed with a curious-looking paper-cutter. It was made of pure silver, in the shape of a dagger; the blade was exquisitely chased, and bore a Greek motto. After a time Kiaros looked up and saw his guest regarding the paper-cutter.

"It is a relic most curious," said he, "from the ruins of Missolonghi rescued, and by a friend sent to me. All that is Greek I love. Soon to my country I shall return, and that is why I cannot risk the money I have in a lifetime earned."

Still Marston did not reply, but sat looking thoughtfully at the table. Kiaros was not impatient. He continued to play with the silver dagger, and poised it upon his finger while he awaited the young man's decision.

"I think I shall be able to get along with the thousand dollars," said Marston at last, his collected tones showing no trace of the disappointment Kiaros had expected. "Can you let me have it now?"

"Yes. As you know, the money is in my safe. I will make out the note."

He quietly laid down the paper-cutter and drew a note-book from a drawer of the table. Dipping a pen in the inkwell, he rapidly filled up the note and pushed it across the table to Marston.

"Will you sign?" he asked, with his customary smile.

Marston drew his chair close to the table and examined the note.

"You said you would not rob me!" he demurred

"The commission it is very little," replied Kiaros, coolly. "A broker much more would have exacted."

Marston picked up the pen, dashed off his name, and tossed the paper towards Kiaros. The Greek inspected it carefully, and rising from his chair, walked to the safe and drew open the heavy door. He placed the note in one drawer, and from another removed an oblong tin box, which he brought to the table. Reseating himself, he opened this box and drew out a large packet of banknotes.

Marston watched him listlessly as he carefully counted out one thousand dollars.

"The amount is, I believe, correct," said Kiaros, after a second count; "if you will kindly verify it I shall be pleased."

Marston half arose and reached out his hand, but he did not take the money. Instead, his fingers closed over the handle of the silver dagger, and with a swift, well-directed blow he plunged it to the hilt in the breast of the Greek. The old man lay back in his chair with a low moan, his form quivered once or twice and then became still, while a silence that suddenly seemed oppressive pervaded the little room.

III

Felix Marston sat down in his chair and stared at the form of Kiaros. The usually benevolent features of the Greek were horribly convulsed, and the dark eyes had caught and held a sudden look of terror. His right hand, resting upon the table, still grasped the bundle of banknotes. The handle of the silver dagger glistened in the lamplight just above the heart, and a dark-colored fluid was slowly oozing outward and discoloring the old man's clothing and the point of his snowy beard.

Marston drew out his handkerchief and wiped the moisture from his forehead. Then he arose, and going to his victim, carefully opened the dead hand and removed the money. In the tin box was the remainder of the twelve thousand dollars the Greek had that day received. Marston wrapped it all in a paper and placed it in his breast pocket. Then he went to the safe, replaced the box in its drawer, and found the note he had just signed. This he folded and placed carefully in his pocket-book. Returning to the table, he stood looking down upon the dead man.

"He was a very good fellow, old Kiaros," he murmured; "I am sorry I had to kill him. But this is no time for regrets; I must try to cover all traces of my crime. The reason most murderers are discovered is because they become terrified, are anxious to get away, and so leave clues behind them. I have plenty of time. Probably no one knows of my visit here to-night, and as the old man

lives quite alone, no one is likely to come here before morning."

He looked at his watch. It was a few minutes after ten o'clock.

"This ought to be a case of suicide," he continued, "and I shall try to make it look that way."

The expression of Kiaros' face first attracted his attention. That look of terror was incompatible with suicide. He drew a chair beside the old man and began to pass his hands over the dead face to smooth out the contracted lines. The body was still warm, and with a little perseverance Marston succeeded in relaxing the drawn muscles until the face gradually resumed its calm and benevolent look.

The eyes, however, were more difficult to deal with, and it was only after repeated efforts that Marston was able to draw the lids over them, and hide their startled and horrified gaze. When this was accomplished, Kiaros looked as peaceful as if asleep, and the cashier was satisfied with his progress. He now lifted the Greek's right hand and attempted to clasp the fingers over the handle of the dagger, but they fell away limply.

"Rigor mortis has not yet set in," reflected Marston, "and I must fasten the hand in position until it does. Had the man himself dealt the blow, the tension of the nerves of the arm would probably have forced the fingers to retain their grip upon the weapon." He took his handkerchief and bound the fingers over the hilt of the dagger, at the same time altering the position of the head and body to better suit the assumption of suicide.

"I shall have to wait some time for the body to cool," he told himself, and then he considered what might be done in the meantime.

A box of cigars stood upon the mantel. Marston selected one and lit it. Then he returned to the table, turned up the lamp a trifle, and began searching in the drawers for specimens of the Greek's handwriting. Having secured several of these, he sat down and studied them for a few minutes, smoking collectedly the while, and taking care to drop the ashes in a little tray that Kiaros had used for that purpose. Finally he drew a sheet of paper towards him, and carefully imitating the Greek's sprawling chirography, wrote as follows:

"My money I have lost. To live longer I cannot. To die I have therefore resolved. KIAROS."

"I think that will pass inspection," he muttered, looking at the paper approvingly, and comparing it again with the dead man's writing. "I must avoid all risks, but this forgery is by far too clever to be detected." He placed the paper upon the table before the body of the Greek, and then rearranged the papers as he had found them.

Slowly the hours passed away. Marston rose from his chair at intervals and examined the body. At one o'clock rigor mortis began to set in, and a half hour later Marston removed the handkerchief, and was pleased to find the hand retained its grasp upon the dagger. The position of the dead body was now very natural indeed, and the cashier congratulated himself upon his success.

There was but one task remaining for him to accomplish. The door must be found locked upon the inside. Marston searched until he found a piece of twine, one end of which he pinned lightly to the top of the table, a little to the left of the inkwell. The other end of the twine he carried to the door, and passed it through the slide in the panel. Withdrawing the key from the lock of the door, he now approached the table for the last time, taking a final look at the body, and laying the end of his cigar upon the tray. The theory of suicide had been excellently carried out; if only the key could be arranged for, he would be satisfied. Reflecting thus, he leaned over and blew out the light.

It was very dark, but he had carefully considered the distance beforehand, and in a moment he had reached the hallway and softly closed and locked the door behind him. Then he withdrew the key, found the end of the twine which projected through the panel, and running this through the ring of the key, he passed it inside the panel, and allowed the key to slide down the cord until a sharp click told him it rested upon the table within. A sudden jerk of the twine now unfastened the end which had been pinned to the table, and he drew it in and carefully placed it in his pocket. Before closing the door of the panel, Marston lighted a match, and satisfied himself the key was lying in the position he had wished. He breathed more freely then and closed the panel.

A few minutes later he had reached the street, and after a keen glance up and down, he stepped boldly from the doorway and walked away.

To his surprise, he now felt himself trembling with nervousness, and despite his endeavors to control himself, it required all of his four-mile walk home to enable him to regain his wonted composure.

He let himself in with his latch-key, and made his way noiselessly to his room. As he was a gentleman of regular habits, the landlady never bothered herself to keep awake watching for his return.

IV

Mr. Marston appeared at the office the next morning in an unusually good humor, and at once busied himself with the regular routine of duties.

As soon as he was able, he retired to his private office and began to revise the books and make out a new trial balance. The exact amount he had stolen from the firm was put into the safe, the false figures were replaced with correct ones, and by noon the new balance sheet proved that Mr. Marston's accounts were in perfect condition.

Just before he started for luncheon a clerk brought him the afternoon paper.

"What do you think, Mr. Marston?" he said. "Old Kiaros has committed suicide."

"Indeed! Do you mean the Kiaros who was here yesterday?" inquired Marston, as he put on his coat.

"The very same. It seems the old man lost his money in some unfortunate speculation, and so took his own life. The police found him in his room this morning, stabbed to the heart. Here is the paper, sir, if you wish to see it."

"Thank you," returned the cashier, in his usual quiet way. "I will buy one when I go out," and without further comment he went to luncheon.

But he purchased a paper, and while eating read carefully the account of Kiaros' suicide. The report was reassuring; no one seemed to dream the Greek was the victim of foul play.

The verdict of the coroner's jury completed his satisfaction. They found that Kiaros had committed suicide in a fit of despondency. The Greek was buried and forgotten, and soon the papers teemed with sensational accounts of the brilliant wedding of that estimable gentleman, Mr. Felix Marston, to the popular society belle, Miss Gertrude Van Alsteyne. The happy pair made a bridal trip to Europe, and upon their return Mr. Marston was installed as an active partner in the great firm of Van Alsteyne, Traynor & Marston.

* * * * * * *

This was twenty years ago. Mr. Marston to-day has

an enviable record as an honorable and highly respectable man of business, although some consider him a trifle too cold and calculating.

His wife, although she early discovered the fact that he had married her to further his ambition, had found him reserved and undemonstrative, but always courteous and indulgent to both herself and her children.

He holds his head high and looks every man squarely in the eye, and he is very generally envied, since everything seems to prosper in his hands.

Which goes to prove that every crime is not punished, that many a so-called gentleman is a crook with a record, and that half the world does not know what the other half is doing.

"THE WHITE LADY"

AMONG superstitious persons in Germany the present war has revived the fearsome tales of "The White Lady of the Hohenzollerns," the private ghost of the German imperial family, whose visitations always augur impending ill fortune. This spook of ill omen is said to have paid her last visit to earth eighty-two years ago, and the death of the sister of King Frederick I. of Wurttemberg immediately followed. The "White Lady" of the Hohenzollerns does not confine her missions as bearer of bad tidings to the members of the imperial house, but also warns Germany's foes of impending evil. It is declared that she called on Napoleon while he was quartered in the palace at Bayreuth, shortly before he set out upon his ill-fated Russian expedition.

The legend of the Prussian "White Lady" dates back six centuries or more. The original "White Lady" is said to have been a beautiful Countess of Bayreuth, who, when a widow with two children, formed an irregular alliance with a Hohenzollern Prince. At length she appealed to him to marry her, but he replied that two people stood in the way and made their union impossible. He referred to his parents, but she misunderstood and, thinking her children were the obstacles, murdered them. This deed was so shocking to the prince that he refused henceforth to see his mistress, who died of a broken heart. Thereafter the shade of the woman haunted the palaces of the Hohenzollerns, always appearing before some ill was to befall the family, or the enemies of the family.

Vicomte d'Arlincourt, in his "Le Pererin," tells of a conversation he had with the Prince of Montfort, in which the latter told of the last appearance of the "White Lady." The Vicomte quotes the prince as saying:

"My mother, sister to King Frederick I. of Wurttemburg, lay ill at Lausanne, but was not supposed to be in a serious condition. The doctors reassured us, so we were not worried. One night in the ancient castle of the Duke of Wurttemburg I was awakened from sleep by a loud noise as of some one stirring about the room. The White Lady had come along a gallery, had passed the sentinels who were frozen with fear, and knocked at my door. When I told my uncle, King Ferdinand, of the visitation he bade me set forth at once for Switzerland. I started at once and reached Lausanne, only to hear my mother's last sigh."

CIVIL WAR FOOD PRICES

THE high cost of living during the Civil War and the inconvenience and suffering which followed have remained for half a century the standard for all comparisons. The prices demanded, especially in 1863, were thought to be beyond all reason. Poor people, even those in moderate circumstances, often found them prohibitive. A violent protest followed, and strikes and mass meetings became common throughout the country. In every city parades were organized to demand lower prices and high wages. The social unrest was far more serious than any we know to-day.

With the present cost of living in mind, the records of food prices during the Civil War make interesting reading. Prices rose steadily from 1861 to 1863, and the level reached in the third year of the war was the high-water mark. The increase for the period varied from 60 to 75 per cent., and in some instances 100 per cent. At the beginning of the war eggs sold for 15 cents a dozen, and in 1863 at 25 cents. Cheese rose from 8 to 18 cents a pound. A bushel of potatoes sold for $1.50 in 1861, and three years later for $2.25, a price scarcely exceeded to-day. One of the chief sources of complaint was the cost of sugar, which rose to 12 or 15 cents a pound. One of the curiosities of the list was the price of butter, which for a long time hung around 80 cents a pound. Cotton sold at one time for $1 a yard.

The saloons felt the pinch also in 1863. A meeting of saloon owners was held in New York to consider the problem, and in the face of great public opposition the price of a drink of liquor was raised from 6 to 10 cents. The best hotels raised their rates to $2.50 and later to $3 a day and charged extra for heat and light. The rate included a room and three meals a day. The barbers demanded 10 cents for shaving and 20 cents for a hair cut. Ice was considered a great luxury and was supplied at the rate of 50 cents a week for a supply of ten pounds a day.

The average cost of foods, it is seen, was well below the prices of to-day. The explanation of the violent protests throughout the country will be found, however, in the comparatively low wages paid in the trades and professions. Banners borne in a parade in New York demanded a wage of $1.12 a day. The average rate for common labor rose as high as $1.25 for a day's work. Even the skilled workmen fared little better. The wages of blacksmiths rose from $1.75 to $2 a day, while the bricklayers in 1863 received $2 a day instead of $1.25, as at the beginning of the war. A skilled painter received $1.75 a day, joiners and shipbuilders $2, quarrymen $1.12. Coachmen were paid $30 a month and waiters from $12 to $18 a month.

The prices of food and clothing reached far greater heights in the South. In a diary kept by Mrs. Jefferson Davis it is recorded that in 1862, in Richmond, mutton sold for 37 cents a pound, potatoes for $6 a bushel, tea for $5 a pound, flour at $300 a barrel, and turkey brought $60. A pair of boots cost $25. Many of these prices were due to speculation in food. At one time beef sold for $6 a pound and flour for $1,000 a barrel.

These extraordinary prices, however, were fictitious. It made all the difference in the world whether the bills were paid in gold or in Confederate money. At this time an Englishman wrote from Charleston that he had never lived so well and so cheaply. The regular hotel rates in paper money were $20 a day, but they cost the Englishman but 3 shillings a day. The bill was paid in gold.

TRUMPS

By WILLIAM WALLACE COOK

"HI, there, you little imp! Drop that! Drop that, I tell you! Head him off, stranger! Good! That's the first time on record he was ever caught red-handed! I'll give it to him now! Why, he'd steal the counter if he could carry it away!"

I had just started to enter the Post Trader's store at Fort Totten, when the first of the foregoing reached my ears. At the farther end of the long, low room that stretched out before me stood the plethoric Post Trader, wildly waving his arms and shouting at the top of his voice. In the immediate foreground, near me and rapidly drawing nearer, was a singular specimen of the genus Indian. He was very small, and could not have been more than nine or ten years of age, but he was fearfully and wonderfully accoutered in a combination of soldier's uniform, civilian's dress, and the buckskin costume more or less identified with the redman. I had no time for further observations at that moment, for, being the stranger to whom the Post Trader had appealed, I made a grab at the juvenile redskin, then I made another, and finally caught and held him by main force.

As the Post Trader advanced towards us, he paused and selected a rawhide "quirt" from a bunch that hung near the door. Then he twisted his hand firmly in the young redskin's collar, and relieved me of all further responsibility.

Jerking the boy to the center of the room, he shook him until his teeth chattered, and from the ill-fitting and ragged garments with which he was clad fell several packages of tobacco, a clay pipe, two or three boxes of matches, and several other things which I did not take time to note.

"Great heavens!" I cried; "how could he ever have concealed all that?"

"My dear sir," returned the Post Trader, "that young rascal is capable of making a regular cornucopia out of himself. But I shall give him a lesson he won't soon forget," and the Post Trader lifted high the hand that held the quirt.

In anticipation of the blow, the boy set up a series of terrific yells and struggled like a young demon. The whip descended once and would have fallen again had not my tender-hearted sister, Marie, hastened through the door and caught the Post Trader's uplifted arm, much to that gentleman's astonishment.

"Oh, sir," cried Marie, "do not strike the little fellow again! See how he cringes! Ah, it is cruel, cruel!"

"Marie," I began, in a tone of expostulation, "I wouldn't——"

She stamped her foot impatiently as she turned to me.

"Ned, I am ashamed of you! You stand there looking as though you really enjoyed the spectacle of this child's chastisement." She turned to the Post Trader. "What has he done, sir, that calls for this punishment?"

The Post Trader swept his hand about to indicate the heterogeneous assortment of supplies that littered the floor.

"He stole those things, ma'am, and he's always stealing something. It's rarely indeed that we can catch him in the act, and when we do, believe me, it is a public duty to give him a taste of the strap."

The boy, during this brief conversation, had transformed himself from a howling little fiend into a picture of misery so abject and so forlorn that my poor deluded sister was almost melted to tears. His brown hands were curled up and thrust into his eyes, and he was sobbing as though his heart was about to break.

"You will let him go, won't you?" pleaded Marie.

The Post Trader was loth to forego the duty that he had long promised himself the pleasure of performing.

"But, my dear young lady——"

"I know what you would say," broke in Marie; "you would tell me that he deserves it, but I do not agree with you. Older heads have planned this thievery, I am sure. That tobacco is probably for his father, and you should——"

"No, young lady," and a half smile came to the Post Trader's lips, "all those things were destined for his own use."

A horror, at which I could not avoid a slight laugh, was manifested in Marie's face and voice as she asked:

"You do not mean to say that that child smokes?"

"He does, ma'am, and swears, too—like a pirate."

"Dear, dear!" wailed Marie. "Ned, did you ever hear of anything so dreadful in all your life? Oh, but you are laughing! I suppose you think it a joke for a little fellow who is hardly more than an infant to do such things." She reached down and put one gloved hand under the dirty little chin. "What is your name, little boy?" she asked, but his sobs only broke forth afresh and he made no answer.

"Trumps," put in the Post Trader. "We call him Trumps because—well, er—because he takes everything."

"Surely, he has another name?"

"No; he was christened by the soldiers at the fort, who adopted him after his mother died and his father was hung. But Trumps was such a confirmed thief that they had to turn him out, and since then the reservation hasn't been large enough to hold him, small as he is."

"Poor child!" exclaimed Marie, "to be cast adrift at such a tender age. Small wonder his morals are not what they should be. You could not expect——"

Suddenly there came an embryo war-whoop from the juvenile culprit, as, like lightning, he sprang out of the Post Trader's grasp, which had been temporarily loosened while Marie was interceding for him, rushed towards me, dealt me a blow on the arm with all his puny strength, and vanished through the door like a flash.

"No use trying to do anything with him," said the Post Trader, disgustedly. "He's a born thief, and what's bred in the bone can't be educated out of a person. He's a bad Indian. When he grows up he'll undoubtedly kill somebody, like his father did, and stretch a halter at the government's expense."

"You are not patient enough with him," persisted Marie; "if I had him I'm sure I could soon wean him from his wild ways and teach him something."

"Why, young lady, he'd steal your Bible while you were teaching him the Ten Commandments."

So much for Trumps, just then. After buying what we had come for, Marie and I went out to remount our horses

and ride back to the hotel, when I discovered that my pony was gone. I had hitched him securely beside Marie's, but he was now nowhere to be seen.

"This is beastly luck!" I exclaimed. "The animal has broken loose and there is no telling where he is by this time."

The Post Trader was standing in his doorway.

"I imagine, sir," he called out, "that Trumps could tell you something about that horse."

"What! You don't think he would be so bold as to steal him?"

"Yes, I do! Trumps would steal an elephant, if it happened to catch his fancy. I noticed your horse, sir. A clean-limbed, well put up bronco—just the brute to catch an Indian's eye."

"Surely he wouldn't do anything like that!" put in Marie.

But he had, as we found out in a very few moments from several soldiers who had seen Trumps careering madly towards the heart of the reservation on a horse that answered the description of mine.

"Well, my dear," I said a little sarcastically, "what do you think of that child now?"

"I presume you will have the soldiers hunt him down, won't you, Ned?"

"Certainly; I cannot afford to lose a fifty-dollar pony out of mere sentiment. This will prove a pretty serious affair for Mr. Trumps."

"They—they won't hang him, will they?"

"Hardly. He will be spared the extreme penalty because of his tender years. I have no doubt, however, but that he will be called upon to pass a season at some reform school. Let us hope that this will be a season of repentance."

Marie bowed her head. I could not understand what there was about the juvenile savage to touch her so powerfully, but when she lifted her eyes I saw that they held traces of tears.

Trumps, however, proved himself too cunning for even the entire force at the garrison. Though they searched the reservation from end to end, neither boy nor horse were they able to find.

A fortnight passed away, and I had almost reconciled myself to the loss of the pony, when Trumps put in an appearance both sudden and dramatic.

At this time the mail for Fort Totten was conveyed across Silver Lake in a little steam launch from Devil's City. Happening to be in the latter place one day, and wishing to return to Fort Totten as soon as possible, Marie and I boarded the launch for a trip back to the fort by lake. We had not noticed the lowering sky, nor the angry face of the waters before coming aboard, but when we were fairly out into the lake, the tossing of the little craft made us forcibly aware of the portentous aspect of wind and wave.

"Ned," whispered Marie, pressing closer to my side, "hadn't we better go back to the dock? I am afraid; the lake looks so threatening."

I turned to the man at the tiller, and asked him if it would not be well to return and not attempt the voyage across. He laughed roughly, and assured us that he would be tied up safely at Fort Totten before the squall struck us.

But he erred, as we found out later, to our cost. Great billows of clouds, black as night, rolled over the sky, and lightning zigzagged through the murky mass to an accompaniment of fierce thunder. The wind, sweeping broadly across the prairies, caught up the waters of the lake in huge waves, and dashed them against the boat with such force that it careened wildly and seemed on the point of foundering.

"Oh, Ned!" cried Marie, for it was useless to speak in a tone of voice milder than a shout, "we will go to the bottom; I know we will!"

"Courage, my dear," I replied, placing my arm about her, and clutching an iron bar for support. Then I halloed to the steersman: "What are our chances for getting out of this alive?"

"They're good," he shouted back, "if we don't strike one of those infernal rocks——"

Just at that instant there came a shock that caused the launch to quiver from stem to stern; following this was heard a grating sound, and we came to a dead stop, the boat settling over on its side, so that the billows of water came tumbling in on us, threatening instant destruction.

"There! By thunder, we've struck one now!" added the steersman, abandoning his tiller. "Can you swim?"

"Yes," I answered, frantically, "but my sister can't. Where are the life preservers?"

"Haven't one aboard. Sorry I can't help you, but this is a case of every fellow for himself," and he flung off his coat and sprang into the seething waters.

Marie clung to me tightly. If her heart was tender, it was also brave, and she asked, with her lips to my ear:

"Must we die, Ned? Dear Ned, is there no hope?"

I peered off into the watery mist that surrounded us like a fog. I had an idea that we had struck on one of the rocky reefs close to shore, but could not assure myself of this.

"As long as the boat holds together, Marie, we will remain with it and hope for the best."

"Hark!" she cried; "did I not hear some one calling?"

She pointed off into the mist, in the direction of the shore.

"If so," I answered, "we must be very close to land, else we could not hear the sound. Courage, dear, courage!"

Then we both listened and heard distinctly a shrill cry borne to us faintly up against the wind. I answered at the top of my voice.

"Some one must be coming to us in a boat," I said.

"No boat could live in a sea like this," she returned; "but there, Ned—look! look!"

A dark object came towards us out of the wall of water; it drew closer, rising and falling like a cork upon the buffeting billows. It was Trumps! Trumps swimming towards us on my horse! He was crouched down along the pony's neck, his long, black hair streaming out behind him, his teeth set and his eyes blazing with determination. The pony's nostrils were distended, and from the animal's hoarse breathing I could tell what a terrible struggle he was making.

"My heavens, Marie!" I cried; "it's the little Indian!"

Marie looked up into the inky blackness for a moment, but spoke no word. Trumps guided the horse to us and grasped the side of the boat, every wave dashing him with frightful, sickening force against the timbers.

"Me come for she!" he gasped, his face convulsed with pain; "get on horse, quick—quick!"

It was almost a struggle of life or death to get Marie to the horse's back in that terrific sea, but Trumps helped and we succeeded. Then the boy would have turned the horse's head shoreward, but Marie clutched the boat and cried out to me.

"No!" screamed Trumps; "me no save him! Me no like——"

But Marie's distress carried the day, and Trumps drew himself painfully off the horse's back upon the boat. He swore again and again as his bruised limbs failed to perform their function and he fell back. In his hand he held a rope made fast to the pummel of the saddle; thrusting

this into my hand, he loosened Marie's clutch on the side of the boat and the horse was carried off, while I threw myself into the water and struggled blindly.

How we reached shore, neither Marie nor I could ever tell; but my horse brought us gallantly out of that living death—I with a broken arm, and she with a scar on her white brow that time will never efface.

And Trumps? The Post Trader had some unsympathetic remarks to make about people who were born to be hung, etc., but, be that as it may, Trumps managed to get ashore. He kept the Post Trader busy for a long time, but finally convalesced so suddenly that the doctor missed him from the hospital ward one afternoon, together with a fine case of surgical instruments. Thanks to my efforts, however, Trumps was recaptured and is now in the Indian school at Carlisle. When he is through with that institution Marie vows that he shall become a permanent fixture of her household. I make no objections. The incidents narrated here happened some years ago and Marie has now a household of her own.

SUPERSTITION IN WAR

ALONG with the spiritual revival due to the war has come a renewal of superstition. Nowhere is this seen more frequently than among the fighting men themselves. Almost without exception every soldier cherishes the thought that he will not be hit. So it is no difficult matter for him to believe that some talisman can help toward his safety. He may not actually believe that it has sovereign powers—but there can be no harm in having one, he reasons.

Among the French it is held particularly fortunate to have a gold coin in one's possession when going into battle. And if one gold coin means good luck, several imply an abundance of it. This practise grew to such proportions that the Government made an appeal to the army, asking that all gold be surrendered to the central authority, or at least not carried into battle, where it might fall into enemy hands.

There is the story of a French infantryman who believed that to put on his left shoe and sock before the right was to court good luck. His companions chided him, and he finally gave way. Upon a certain morning he put on the right shoe and sock before the left, although with misgivings. That day he was killed. First his platoon, then a company, a battalion, a whole division, adopted the left shoe superstition.

It is an old tradition of the French service that fortune will favor the man who rubs wine behind his ears before entering battle. Just where this originated no one knows. It is a custom on the part of our ally to issue wine before ordering an assault. And then the ceremony takes place. It is deemed especially good to catch a few drops from the jug or decanter as a glass is being filled.

QUEER SHAPES STONES TAKE

ONE of the strangest public works ever suggested to a king was that brought to the notice of Alexander the Great by Dinocrates. His proposal was to take Mount Athos and cut and carve it into the shape of a man holding a town in one hand and a cup in the other, in which he could receive the drainage of the mountain before it fell into the sea.

Alexander seemed pleased with the extravagant notion, but blandly asked the proprietor if the town would be surrounded with such land as would yield enough to feed it, says the Washington *Post*.

He was informed that the town would have to trust entirely for its provisions to the sea, very much like a certain country we are acquainted with to-day.

"Dinocrates," said Alexander, "I admit the beauty of your scheme, but it seems to me that, if I were to plant a colony as you suggest, there would be a risk of my being accused of a want of foresight. As a child cannot live nor develop without its nurse, so a town cannot increase unless it has proper food. I, therefore, approve of your plan, but I disapprove of the locality you have chosen. You can, however, remain in attendance, as I'll need you."

The Macedonian architect thus gained a royal patron, but not a commission on the scale he sought, or pretended to seek. His idea had evidently been suggested to him by the curious shapes that rock masses take.

In Great Britain such shapes are frequent. There are the Cornish Lions and Lord Brougham and the Armed Knight, to say nothing of others along the southwestern coast. There are also the Old Man and the Old Dame and the Duke's Nose and the Witch's Head.

There are, in fact, faces on the hills, in the fields, in the sky and in the fire, and wherever we choose to look for them. All we want are the necessary imagination and desire to be misled. Like Polonius, we can conceive a cloud to be very like a whale, or very like anything else. And a range of hills or coast line will lend itself to almost any fancy we choose.

Sometimes the fancy has been taken advantage of. In Cardinal Montalto's garden at Rome there used to be a marble slab, on which was cut a suggested landscape by Kirchner, of magic lantern fame.

Kirchner's landscape resolved itself at a distance into a human head with very curly locks and a village on the bridge of the nose.

The eyes was very prominent, but how it was to be obtained except by color was not very clear. However, it was plain enough in the plan, with a man shooting into it as if it were a target.

The giant's nether lip and chin came well out against the skyline, and altogether the design was not a bad one.

Our own country, above all others, abounds in these faces of nature. All the Eastern and Middle States are dotted with mountains and hills in a thousand varying shapes, and it would be strange if nature had not indulged in her well-known freaks.

On the Hudson River, St. Anthony's Nose is a prominent object, and there are other faces well known to the traveler.

In the White Mountains, the Old Man of the Mountains has been a wonder to tourists for many years.

In the Rockies, faces of nature are numerous, and as the region is becoming more fully explored, amazing shapes are daily discovered. Elephants, bears, lions, crouching tigers, as well as human faces and forms, loom up before the astonished tourist.

MISS VILDA'S TRAMP

By FRANCIS A. COREY

A WILD, wet night with a mighty wind banging shutters and driving the rain in drenching sheets against the window panes.

Miss Vilda Parsons sat alone before a blazing wood fire. It was twelve o'clock. Her two servants had been in bed since nine; but Miss Vilda liked to sit musing by herself when the house was still. Sometimes she had only pleasant thoughts; but to-night there were lines between her gentle blue eyes. Bitter sweet memories crowded fast upon her. She would have given the whole world for one of the lover's kisses who had died eighteen years before!

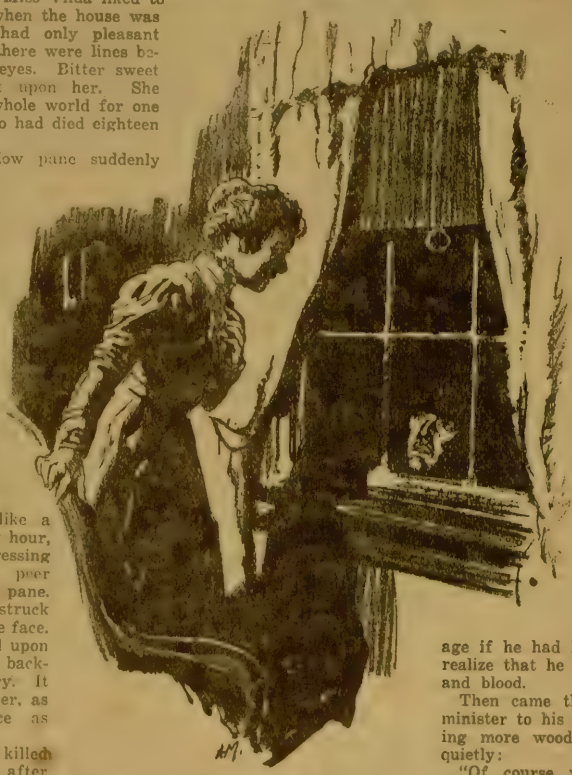
A tap on the window pane suddenly startled her. Miss Vilda was a brave little woman. There was no outcry as, looking around, she beheld the burly figure of a man pushing against the casement. Going to the window, she asked what the midnight visitor wanted.

"Shelter," was the response. "I lost my way in the storm."

Miss Vilda hesitated. She would not have turned a needy dog from her door. But to take in a stranger, who looked like a tramp, at that unseemly hour, was another matter. Pressing nearer, she tried to peer through the rain-blurred pane.

The light from within struck across a darkly handsome face. As her strained eyes fell upon it, Miss Vilda staggered backward with a terrified cry. It was the face of her lover, as youthful in appearance as when she last beheld it.

The shock would have killed some women. Miss Vilda, after a moment's terrible stillness, groped for the window fastenings with trembling hands.



Miss Vilda staggered backward with a terrified cry.

A protesting voice sounded without. The man misunderstood the movement.

"Of course the road leads to a village or farm-house. But I'm exhausted. I can go no farther."

By this time she had succeeded in opening the long, low window. The man, with an exclamation of relief, stepped over the sill into the room.

He was a pitiable looking object. His drenched garments clung to him in patches like huge plasters, and water ran down in little streams from his slouch hat.

"A beastly night," he shuddered, approaching the fire, and holding out blue, shaking hands to the blaze.

Miss Vilda stood quaking with terror, as at a supernatural vision. Yes, it was William's face, but stronger, more reckless, with deeper lines about the mouth and eyes. The long years seemed to fall suddenly away, leaving the lonely woman on the threshold of her vanished youth.

The intruder suddenly glanced at her sharply.

"I'm a stranger here," he said. "My name is—is—Belden. Yes, Dick Belden. I have been sketching in the neighborhood. To-day I wandered farther than usual. Storm and darkness overtook me in the hills, and I lost my way."

Miss Vilda drew a deep breath. If he had said his name was William Crane it would not have surprised her. But no. The resemblance was accidental, of course. William would have been double this man's age if he had lived. So she began to realize that he was a creature of flesh and blood.

Then came the womanly impulse to minister to his physical wants. Throwing more wood on the fire, she said quietly:

"Of course you are hungry. The servants have gone to bed, but I can find you something to eat. Better throw off your soaked coat and wrap yourself completely up in the shawl." She laid the shawl on a chair within reach. Later, when she came back from the kitchen with a steaming cup of coffee and such food as could be hastily picked up, he wore the shawl, and his ragged coat was drying before the fire.

He ate sparingly. Miss Vilda watched him with a fascinated gaze. The likeness to her dead lover grew upon her momentarily. Sometimes a look or a gesture cut her

to the heart. Once, under the influence of this feeling, she unwittingly called him "William."

He glanced up quickly, a queer look in his eyes. It almost seemed as if he understood.

Meanwhile the storm had increased in violence. Miss Vilda's heart fluttered with intense consciousness of that presence just across the hearth. It was a long time since she had had a solitary tête-à-tête with a man.

"What if the servants should come down-stairs and find him here?" thought this old maid of thirty-nine, blushing up to her ears. "But I won't be silly. I'm old enough to be his aunt."

Then an unexpected problem confronted her. What was to be done with the poor fellow? Old Silas Spear, verging on to ninety, was the only man her roof had sheltered for years; but she could not send him adrift on such a night.

"I'll camp on the floor or anywhere," he said, as if in answer to her unspoken thought.

Miss Vilda rose with an air of decision. No matter what the servants thought, this stranger should have the best in the house just as if he were William himself.

So she got the "spare room" ready and laid out dry underclothing, redolent of camphor gum, that had been her father's. The man's face was a study as he took the lamp from her hand and bade her good-night.

Some wakeful hours followed for Miss Vilda. If Dick Belden was really an artist, he belonged to the vagabond type. How did she know that he was not a thief and a murderer? The risk incurred was frightful to contemplate.

"I'm glad I let him stay," she muttered, half defiantly, as she tossed and turned upon her bed. "But I hope he'll go at daybreak."

A ragged coat and shabby hat were the first things she saw on descending to the sitting-room. Hearing footsteps approach, she hastily thrust the telltale garments out of sight as her woman servant entered.

"Lay an extra plate, Martha," she said, with forced composure. "A—a—visitor came unexpectedly late last night."

The servant stared at her mistress solemnly. Guests were few and far between at Meadowvale Farm. But she was not given to many words; so Miss Vilda had no troublesome questions to answer.

Breakfast was long delayed that morning; still no sound from the regions above. Miss Vilda, anxious and fearful, finally sent old Silas to investigate; but she was close at his heels when he reached the guest chamber door. A low babbling suddenly became audible within.

"He is ill; raving with fever!" the startled woman exclaimed.

And so it proved. The night's exposure had developed germs of disease that had long been dormant in vitiated blood.

Of course Miss Vilda took her post at his bedside. Never had sick man a more devoted nurse. From the first moment she hugged to her heart a pleasing delusion. He whose brow she bathed, whose lips she moistened, was no stranger—it was William himself!

To the doctor and her household she simply stated that Dick Belden was "a friend," vouchsafing no explanation of his sudden appearance. But those who had seen him lurking about the neighborhood before the storm soon came to speak of him as Miss Vilda's tramp.

There was something beautiful and pathetic in the lovely woman's devotion. From loving her protégé as William Crane, it was easy to go a step further and love him for himself.

In her affection for him, mother and sweetheart were singularly blended. While watching for the slightest change with maternal solicitude, the mere touch of his restless hands made her thrill and quiver like a girl of sixteen.

One day, rousing from a refreshing slumber, he looked at her for a long moment with questioning eyes.

"I remember now," he said slowly, in his natural voice. Then added: "You are very good."

From that hour convalescence was rapid. Soon Dick changed the couch for an easy-chair at a sunny window. Here he sat all day long looking down upon the fertile fields of Meadowvale Farm, while its well-to-do mistress sewed or embroidered in a state of blissful happiness.

The pure-hearted old maid could not blind herself to the real nature of her feelings. Neither did she make the attempt. This unknown man, fifteen years her junior, was more deeply loved than William had been in her passionate youth—and she knew it!

Did he return her affection? There were times when she felt almost sure that he did. His manner was devotion itself—his eyes looked unutterable things; but no words of love passed his lips.

One day, as they were sitting together, he said abruptly:

"Miss Vilda, I have been very happy here. But I must go away."

"Go away?" she echoed sharply, turning pale and beginning to tremble.

"Yes, to-morrow. I ought to have gone before. I'm almost well now. There's absolutely no excuse for remaining."

She looked down at her shaking hands without replying.

"Miss Vilda," he added, drawing nearer and dropping his voice, "there's something I want to tell you before we part."

"Yes, Dick," she breathed, her heart leaping with sudden ecstasy, and a vivid blush mantling her face that made her almost beautiful.

"I—I lied to you when I said I came to this neighborhood to sketch."

Their eyes met. The color went from her cheeks again.

"Is that all you have to tell me, Dick?"

"Isn't it enough to confess myself an impostor?" half savagely. "I never painted a picture in my life. I was dead broke—tramping it. I'm a bad lot, Miss Vilda; but after all your kindness, I couldn't go away without undeceiving you. I'm not so base as that."

"As if it mattered what you are!" she cried.

"Now that you know, you are as truly my friend as before?"

"Yes; and always shall be."

In his gratitude the rough fellow did an unwise thing. He seized her hand and raised it impulsively to his lips.

"God bless you, dear Miss Vilda!"

Such womanly trust was new to his experience. His better self struggled for the ascendency. He saw her bosom swell, her eyes shine with the delicious tumult raised by the unwonted caress. But it would be cruel and cowardly to take advantage of the very womanly weakness. He would not do it.

"We may never meet after to-morrow; but I shall not forget your goodness to me," he added, his voice husky with real emotion.

A wild tumult filled Miss Vilda's soul. To have everything end there was more than she could endure. Suddenly she tore her hand from his clasp, and with a cry of hopeless misery ran out of the room.

The man's forehead puckered as he stared at the closed door.

"Well, I'll be blowed!" he ejaculated. And then again, after a moment's silence: "I'll be blowed!"

Then he gazed thoughtfully down at the broad meadows, stretching alluringly for miles and miles away, where rich harvests were ripening in the summer sun. What a fine thing to be master of that goodly domain!

Poor Miss Vilda had locked herself in her room, alone with her shame and misery.

What was she, poor, faded "rose of yesterday," that any man should desire her love? The thought of it pressed upon her like a crushing weight. Her limbs shook under her, and crawling to the lounge, she fell weakly upon it.

There she lay for long hours with clenched hands and teeth, telling herself over and over again what a ridiculous old fool she had been.

Next morning she was pale and calm. She believed she had herself well in hand; but when Dick appeared, looking haggard and worn as if he, too, had passed a sleepless night, her womanly tenderness overcame womanly pride.

"You are worse again," she cried, growing yet paler with solicitude. "Oh, don't think of going to-day. You are not able."

"I wish I need not go at all."

"Then why do you? At least until——"

Something in his face stopped her. She felt a sudden faintness, and caught hold of a chair to steady herself. Dick came nearer. The next moment the words for which her starved heart had hungered so fiercely were sounding in her ears.

At first she was half incredulous, and gave way to a burst of hysterical sobs that tore her very soul.

"Oh, do you really love me?" she cried, clinging with both arms about his neck. "Don't tell me so unless it is true. Are you sure it isn't mere gratitude you feel? Oh, it would be a dreadful thing to make a mistake!"

He soothed and reassured her. It is never a difficult matter to convince an infatuated woman that what she ardently desires to believe is true; and Miss Vilda had all the trusting faith that makes her sex adorable.

There was a season of perfect happiness. She had cast off every misgiving. A new earth had been created fairer than any Eden she had ever dreamed of.

Already her handsome young lover was pleading for an immediate marriage.

"Then we need not be parted," he urged, kissing her cheek. "We will have a quiet wedding—just the servants for witnesses—and go away immediately afterward; at least for a few weeks, until—until——"

"I understand," calmly interrupted Miss Vilda. "Until the excitement dies away. Of course, folks will think it strange that you should marry me."

"But it isn't strange at all—if I love you."

"You do, Dick? You do?"

"With all my heart."

His words had a false ring, but the infatuated old maid, clasped in a lover-like embrace, failed to detect it.

For years she had longed to travel. She could afford to go anywhere she pleased. A European trip with Dick would be heaven on earth!

At his request she said nothing of her plans and purposes to any one, but quietly set about the necessary preparations; with all the rest, she collected a considerable sum in banknotes and government bonds, as Dick had advised taking plenty of money along. His influence over her was unbounded. His devotion fully fed her starved heart.

They were to be married Thursday evening, and go away on the ten o'clock train. Dick seemed nervous and restless as the time drew near. Any woman not blindly in love would have noticed the change in him; but Miss Vilda was blissfully unconscious of anything amiss.

She attired herself in a trailing gown of pearl-colored old lace. It gave her the look of an old miniature escaped from its setting. Her jewels—all old-fashioned, some of them valuable—were in their cases on the dressing-table ready for packing. The money and bonds lay beside them In the next room Dick could be heard walking up and down.

"How impatient he is," Miss Vilda thought, stealing a half-shy glance at her flushed face in the mirror. Radiant with happiness, she was almost beautiful.

As she started below, that steady tramp ceased for a moment. Her heart leaped into her throat. Was he coming, too, wild with eagerness? No, he had only pushed the door ajar as if to listen; and she went more soberly on.

The clergyman was in the parlor. Miss Vilda tried to talk to him. She could not. Something had suddenly come over her. A strange turmoil filled her brain. All her senses seemed dormant save that of hearing, which had become preternaturally acute.

Presently stealthy footsteps entered her dressing-room above. She stood motionless, a figure of stone. At length that cat-like tread sounded on the landing and a stair creaked. Frozen with horror she saw, through her half-open door, Dick Belden descend in his tramp clothes, the old slouch hat jammed over his eyes.

There was a moment of terrible suspense; then the outer door softly opened and shut.

"What is it, Miss Vilda?" the clergyman asked, frightened at her strange expression.

Her pale lips moved stiffly without a sound. As he came closer, she slipped past him with a beseeching gesture, out of the room. On the stairs she staggered once or twice, falling dazed and limp against the baluster—only to rouse again and push desperately on.

Her dressing-room was reached at last. One glance at the table and she knew the worst. Money, bonds, jewels—all were gone!

She dropped as if felled by a blow; but she did not lose consciousness. Ere Martha and the clergyman could stumble up the stairs she had rallied sufficiently to crawl to the door and bar the way in.

"Keep back!" she cried. Her voice was strained and harsh. She looked more like a dead than a living woman. "Oh, if you only won't come nigh me now!"

For very pity they turned reluctantly back. Miss Vilda stood for a long time staring wildly about the rifled room. She shuddered convulsively when the ten o'clock train tore shrieking through the valley; but there was no outcry. Poor, wounded soul! her hurt was too deep for that.

Toward midnight a loud ring echoed through the house. Miss Vilda looked up quietly as Martha appeared, trembling and almost speechless. A great calm had fallen upon her.

"What is it?"

"How can I tell you, Miss Vilda? Oh, it's awful!" cried the woman, beginning to weep wildly. It's—it's an accident! At the station below, Dick Belden——"

"Was he—killed?"

"He fell under the wheels as he stepped from the train. They picked him up for dead; but he rallied. He has asked for you——"

Already Miss Vilda was taking down her wraps from the wardrobe. One purpose possessed her—to get to her recreant lover before he died.

It was five miles to Gurley. A furious storm had set in, but she felt not the biting wind or driving rain.

When they ushered her into the room where Dick lay nearer dead than alive, and mangled past recognition, she gave one cry that made the men grouped about his bed tremble and fall back.

It roused him as nothing else could have done. Open-

ing his eyes with a glad light in them he made a feeble attempt to take a package from under his pillow.

"You have come; thank God!" His weak voice was barely audible. "I won't ask you to forgive me, Miss Vilda. You can never do that. I just want to give back with my own hands the things of which I robbed you——"

"Oh, hush!" she whispered, bending close in pitying love and tenderness. "Nobody knows! Nobody shall ever know—from my telling!"

The poor fellow fairly sobbed as he groped weakly for her hand and drew it to his lips.

"God bless you!"

After a season of rest and quiet, he had more to say to her. He was far more eager to confess all his baseness than she was to hear.

"I've lied and dissembled from first to last. My name ain't Belden. It's Richard Crane. Your old lover was my uncle. I saw what effect my likeness to him had upon you, and made the most of it. At first, I really meant to marry you. But I had wronged you enough without that. It was not easy to break away, so I let matters go on until the last moment. Too late I have found out that I cared more for you than I supposed. It may comfort you to know this. Your goodness won me in spite of myself."

Her pale face was twitching with emotion. After a moment she spoke:

"How do you know it is too late?"

"What—what do you mean?" he gasped, looking up at her with a piteous sort of appeal.

"You are not going to die, Dick. I won't let you die!"

Was it her matchless devotion that held him back from the grave? Who shall say? I can only record the fact that after many anxious days and nights he began slowly to mend.

They carried him back to the farm—a cripple for life. In that pure atmosphere the nobler attributes of the man found opportunity for development. In very truth was he a brand snatched from the burning.

And the end is peace.

SOMETHING ABOUT POWDER AND GUNS

JUST 33 complete chemical and mechanical operations have to be gone through with great accuracy, precision and carefulness before white cotton, mixed with sulphuric and nitric acids, becomes smokeless powder.

And after, with elaborate processes, the powder is made at the Picatinny Arsenal, it must travel from Dover, N. J., to the Frankford Arsenal, outside Philadelphia, there to be but an element in the forty complete manufacturing and assembling operations that are required to make an American rifle cartridge.

A rifle is a more or less simple-looking mechanism, but to make this rifle 1,223 separate manufacturing operations must be executed.

One round of 3-inch shrapnel means 355 operations; to make an automatic pistol, 614; and for the terrible little mitrailleuse, or machine gun, 1,990. The lightest 3-inch field gun costs $1,400.

The 14-inch coast defense gun is made at Watervliet Arsenal near Albany, weighing when finished 138,000 pounds, and costing $55,000, and wound about with 37,000 pounds of wire. Its disappearing carriage involves as many as 3,000 separate parts.

PIRATE CAT'S GHOST KEEPS CREW AWAKE

THE crew of an American steamship which arrived recently from a French port told the immigration officers that they had scarcely eaten or slept during the entire trip across the Atlantic, because the ship was haunted by the ghost of a big black cat, which appeared in all parts of the vessel at night and scared the officers and men almost to death. The captain said that the shade of the cat had sat on the rubber mat outside his cabin door at midnight for three nights, and after gazing at him reproachfully with its big red eyes the animal faded into nothing. The lookout man in the crow's nest was positive that the ghost of the cat came and looked over the top of the canvas weather dodgers at him one stormy night near the Azores, which caused the superstitious mariner to yell loudly for his mother to save him, and clamber down the mast to the deck.

Red Mike, the ship's cook, who was known in his youth as "The Terror of Tralee," was darning his socks in the galley by the dim light of one of the hold lanterns when he saw the ghostly cat walk in and sit down on the top of the red-hot stove where he was boiling salt pork for the men's dinner next day. He rushed out on deck yelling at the top of his voice, "Don't let the devil's imp get me, boys!" and fell headlong over the sheet anchor that was lashed down amidships.

Sometimes the cat would be seen during the "graveyard" watch from 12 to 4 a. m., the officers said, standing guard over the grating while the perspiring firemen remained below and were scared to come on deck to get a breath of fresh air. The immigration inspectors were incredulous in regard to the story, and said that the crew of the ship must have been dreaming, as there were no such things as cats having ghosts walking about ships at sea. When the customs officials were on board to search the ship and see if the crew had brought back any French brandy or strong black cigars they, too, scoffed at the cat yarn and frankly avowed their disbelief in ghosts.

After going through the hold and the men's foc'sle forward the customs officials went down in the forepeak to examine the locker. One of them took a lantern in his hand after the hatch had been removed and dropped down lightly on to the cable coiled on the orlop deck, when some big, black object sprang at him and knocked the lantern out of his hand. The official gave a yell and fell backward in the dark, and bumped his head on the stout chains, while the men on the deck above saw the ghost of the black cat, as they believed, whiz through the air and disappear up the companionway which led to the deck.

Old Bill Whiffin, the night watchman on the pier, told the crew that Koko, the big black pirate cat, which had disappeared from the pier about the time the ship left port on her last eastward voyage, had returned and rejoined the nomadic band ashore. The cat must have lived in the chain locker forward for the voyage, and come up and down at night to get food and drink by means of the hawse pipe leading from the deck.

THE CROYDEN CASE

A Detective Serial

BY POLICE CAPTAIN HOWARD

CHAPTER EIGHT

PHIL ROACH ATTENDS A RECEPTION.

AFTER attending to his master, Kissam went into the servant's hall, where the detective was talking with two or three other valets. Kissam came up to the group, and finally took part in the conversation. When he commenced to talk Roach looked at him closely, and as he scanned his features the detective murmured:

"This man was with Ben Sherman last night. I'll watch him and find out for whom he is working."

Finally an opportunity was offered Roach to engage Kissam in conversation, and he said:

"Pardon, monsieur, I tinks zat we hab met before."

"Perhaps so," replied Fred.

"What iz your name?"

"Fred Kissam."

"Monsieur is the valet of Monsieur——"

"Clarence Rupel," broke in Kissam when the detective hesitated,

"Clarence Rupel; vell, zat iz a strange coincidence. I am ze valet of Sir William Rupel."

"Indeed! What is your name?" asked Fred, as the blood rushed into his pale face.

"Alphonse Didet."

"Let's shake," exclaimed Kissam, and at the same time he took the detective's hand and shook it. Then he said:

"Well, Mr. Didet, I am glad to have met you. Perhaps some day I may be able to put you in a way of making considerable money, after we become better acquainted."

"Monsieur iz too kind. If monsieur means what he says I vill be ready at any time to listen to anything zat monsieur may propose."

"You will?" exclaimed Kissam. His eyes twinkled, and his naturally ugly face assumed a sardonic expression as he smiled.

"Yes, monsieur," said the detective, and he became more confidential when he saw that he was drawing Kissam on to disclosing something. "I tell you in ze strictest confidence sometings, if you promise not to tell any ones."

"I promise!" exclaimed Fred.

"Will you swear?"

"I will swear not to reveal anything that you may tell me."

Kissam raised his hand and swore.

"Now I know monsieur is in earnest."

"Well, what is the secret?"

"It is dis: I vould commit any crime if ze money be large."

"Is that all?" queried Kissam, in astonishment; and then, before the detective could say anything further, the fellow said, with some excitement:

"You're the man I'm looking for. Listen! If you promise to do everything that I tell you, I will put you in the way of making a large sum of money."

"How much money?"

"One thousand pounds. How would that suit?"

"Zat is a big lot." Then Roach pretended to be considering it, and he said: "I vill take ze £1,000 and do ze job."

"All right. I'll tell you more about it later on in the evening."

Kissam left the detective and went up-stairs. He was no sooner out of sight than Roach followed. He saw Fred stop in the hall and say something to a servant, who went into the parlor, and soon after returned with Clarence Rupel. When Clarence came out, Kissam beckoned to him, and then led the way to the conservatory, which was vacant at that time in the evening. The detective followed them unobserved, and hid behind a stand which was full of plants, and on the opposite side of which Clarence Rupel and his valet stopped. It was so constructed that a person standing on one side of the stand could not see any one on the other side.

"What do you want?" demanded Clarence, when they had come to a standstill.

"I called you to tell you that I have been talking with Sir William's valet. He is an unscrupulous fellow, and will do anything for money."

"Who is he?"

"He's a Frenchman, and his name is Alphonse Didet."

"Did you tell him anything?"

"Nothing as yet."

"Well, don't until you know him better. Don't make another blunder like that of last night. Lady Jane is here to-night, and that Hoffman is paying her the closest attention. She, Hoffman and William must be got out of the way. The countess was telling me to-night that Phil Roach was the one who rescued Lady Jane."

"That darned detective must be got rid of by some means!" exclaimed Kissam. "I hate him!"

Roach listened attentively to all that was being said, and when he heard Kissam say what he did, a broad grin passed over his face, and he thought:

"They will have to catch me sleeping, if they want to do anything like that."

"I just heard, Fred," said Clarence Rupel, after he and his valet had been silent for a few minutes, "that William is going to take a trip across the Channel. The countess told me that this would be a good opportunity for us to carry out our plans. She says that Ben cannot help us for some time, owing to the fact that he will have to keep very close, and out of the reach of that sleuth-hound."

"Did she say that she would continue to help us?"

"Oh, yes; she will do anything that I desire her to do."

"Has it gone as far as that?"

"Yes. When I get the title, why then she will become Lady Rupel. You know I am helping her now."

"Yes, I know that; but I would not trust her too much."

"Don't worry about her. She is as deep in the mire as we are, and she knows full well how to keep a closed mouth."

"I have a plan that I think will work," said Fred, after Rupel had stopped speaking.

"What is it?"

"When does Sir William sail?"

"Day after to-morrow."

"Well, then, by that time I will be able to find out about the trustworthiness of the valet, and if I find that we can trust him, I will propose that for the consideration of £1,000, which we will pay him in cash, that he devise some means of attacking Sir William."

"That's a good idea," returned Clarence. "I leave it to you. I must return to the parlor, or they will miss me."

So saying, he left Fred and went direct to the parlor, where he met the countess, and told her all that had taken place, and how nicely everything was working in their favor.

Kissam left the conservatory to look for Sir William's valet. The detective was in the servants' hall when Fred entered, and he looked around as unconcerned as if he had not, just a few minutes before, overheard the conversation which made things clear to him that had been clouded in mystery up to this point.

He greeted Kissam and then the scoundrel took his arm, and together they walked up and down the room. If Fred had known that it was Phil Roach to whom he was speaking, and whose arm he had locked with his, he would not have been half so confidential.

"I'll do ze job, monsieur," said Roach, after Kissam had finished speaking; "I'll do ze job for ze £1,000."

"Then I can trust you, Alphonse?"

"Yes."

"Meet me here to-morrow night at ten o'clock and we will talk this matter over."

"I'll be here at ze appointed time."

Phil Roach now shook hands with Kissam and went to attend to William Rupel, who had just sent for him. Mr. Hoffman did not leave with his friend, as he was going to see Lady Jane Austen and Lady Cathcart home. This left William Rupel and the detective the sole occupants of the carriage. After they had ridden some distance William said to the detective:

"Were you satisfied with your visit?"

"Perfectly."

"Did you gain any information?"

"A great deal."

"Of what nature was it?"

"It interests you greatly."

"Me!"

"Yes. There is a plot on foot to murder you."

"Impossible," exclaimed the statesman.

"Nevertheless, it is true."

"Is the countess connected with it?"

"Yes, she and your half-brother, Clarence, are in league together."

"This can't be true. I have known the countess for some time, and she is one of the most upright women in the realm."

"She is, eh? What do you know about this countess?"

"I know that——"

"I know what you are going to say," broke in Phil, "the American heiress story, etc. This countess I have discovered is no countess at all."

"What!"

"No, she is not a countess, but she is the sister of a low rough and thief known as Ben Sherman. Her right name is Nell Sherman, and she is now your half-brother Clarence's mistress."

"Are you sure of this?"

"I am always ready to verify anything that I say. I gained the confidence of your half-brother's valet this evening, and for a large sum of money they have engaged me to murder you while you are crossing the Channel."

"I know that neither Clarence nor his mother bear me any good-will, but then I did not think that they would attempt such a crime as that which you have just mentioned. What would you advise me to do?"

"I will tell you better to-morrow, when I have discovered more fully what their plans are. I will visit the countess to-morrow evening. In the meantime keep perfectly quiet, and say nothing about what I have told you."

"I will keep quiet," answered Rupel, as he descended from the carriage. The detective left the statesman and went home, after promising to call on him the next evening after his interview with the countess and the rest of the conspirators.

William Rupel went to his room and sat down some time in a chair before the fire. His face assumed a troubled expression, and he murmured:

"What have I ever done that I should merit such persecution? I have worked for my fellow-men, and have always acted honestly and upright. Oh, this is terrible!"

He arose from his chair and commenced to pace furiously up and down the room. At last he halted before the secretaire, unlocked a drawer and took therefrom a bundle of papers.

"Here is the evidence of the only crime that I ever committed. Was it really a crime?"

He looked at the papers as he said this, and for some minutes he remained silent. Then he said, as if in answer to the question:

"No, it was not a crime. But then the world will think me guilty. Oh, that I might have died before I reached the age of manhood!"

He commenced to pace up and down the room again, all the time bewailing his fate. At last he stopped before the fire, and held the package of papers as if he were going to burn them. He drew his hand back hurriedly, and exclaimed:

"No, I will not burn these. I'll keep them until after I have heard what Phil Roach has to say about the plans of my step-brother, Clarence, and the countess."

He placed the papers in the drawer again, locked it, and then went to bed. To these papers had been added the account of Madge Babbington's death and burial, and if any one should ever find them William Rupel's guilt would be found out.

In the library, which William had just left, there was a safe which contained a great deal of money, and a number of important State papers.

The statesman had been asleep about an hour, when the door of the library was stealthily opened, and after a few moments' hesitation two men entered the room and locked the door after them.

"Now," said the first, who held a dark-lantern in his hand, "we will have to be quick. So far everything has been in our favor. I heard him say to-day to his friend, the minister chap, that he had just put three thousand pounds in his safe. Ah! there's the beauty," the man cried in a whisper, as he spied the safe. "As I was saying, I heard him tell the minister chap, and I thought we might bag the swag."

"Is this the cove that you are to receive the two thousand pounds for——"

"Yes."

"Then why can't we do the job to-night?"

"No, no; it will not be safe. We can wait."

"All right, Ben, just as you say."

The first thief was no other than Ben Sherman, the brother of the bogus countess. He took from his pocket a bag of tools, and after placing his lantern on the floor he commenced to drill the safe. His companion was not idle. He was rifling the secretaire; at last he came to the drawer that contained the confession. He took the papers in his hand and examined them.

"Look, Ben!" he excitedly exclaimed, rushing to his companion's side. "Look at these. The other cove will pay a good sum of money for these."

Ben Sherman took the papers, looked at them, and then placed them in his pocket, saying:

"We haven't got any time to look at these now. Quick! hold the bag while I put the swag in."

Ben Sherman had opened the safe now, and displayed to view the money and a large quantity of jewelry. Not touching the papers that the safe contained, they emptied the valuables into the bag, and then made good their escape. At the corner of the street they got into a taxicab which was waiting for them, and were driven towards the slums.

Ben Sherman and his gang had deserted both the saloon and the place known as the "Crib," and were now safely lodged in an old rendezvous on the banks of the Thames, near one of the bridges across the world's famous river.

The place had been formerly used as a warehouse, but now it was closed up and only used by the gang. The countess had bought the property some years before, and they were thus free from molestation.

The place was entered by a small iron door in the center of the building. On opening the door Sherman took his dark-lantern from his pocket and turned the rays in the direction they were going.

Along a long and narrow passage they went for about one hundred feet, until they reached a stairway leading down into the basement. They descended this, and then traversed another long passage until their progress was cut short by a brick wall. To a casual observer it appeared as if there was no opening.

Ben Sherman did not wait long, but, handing his bag to his companion, he went to the corner of the wall and rapped three times. In answer to his signal a door flew open and revealed to the gaze a narrow passage about ten feet long. At the end of this passage there was another brick wall, which had the same appearance as the first. Two raps were given here. These raps were answered by one from the inside. Sherman now rapped three times, and then a voice from within demanded:

"What traveler knocks at the gate for succor?"

"A beggar in the guise of a friend," answered Ben Sherman.

"Enter."

A door was now opened and the men entered a small room, which was elaborately furnished. On one side of the room there was a handsomely carved sideboard, on which were displayed wines and choice fruits. The walls were hung with expensive paintings and were elaborately decorated, and the whole *ensemble* was that of an apartment owned by a person of wealth. Ben Sherman went up to the sideboard and filled two glasses with liquor, which he and his companion drank. He then placed his bag upon a center-table and said to the man who had admitted him:

"What time is it, Joe?"

"Six o'clock."

"Has Nell arrived yet?"

"No."

"She promised to be here by six. It may be that the reception was not over until late."

Just then there came a knock at the outer door. The general questioning was gone through with, and the countess was admitted.

"We were just wondering why you were not here," said her brother, as the countess took a seat on the lounge, and threw off the fur-lined coat which she wore.

"I was detained," she said, as she untied her hat-strings.

"I hope you were not followed again?" exclaimed Sherman, and a serious look came over his face.

"No, I was not followed. I stopped some time after the reception was over, for a private talk with Clarence Rupel."

"Oh—how are matters working?"

"Well, he has promised that if we succeed in getting rid of Sir William, Rev. Frank Hoffman and Lady Jane Austen, that he will marry me. The stake is a large one, and I think that we ought to have it."

"True, true," returned Ben Sherman, "the stake is large when one of the family keeps in a safe in his apartments such swag as that," and he pointed with a look of pride at the bag on the table.

"What do you mean?" queried the countess, in some surprise.

"I mean that bag of swag I took from Sir William's safe to-night."

"Was he in the house?"

"I don't know."

"Why didn't you find out?"

"Because I didn't wish to run any risk."

"All right, Ben, we have struck a plan which, we think, will work well," said the countess after a short time.

"What is it?"

"Sir William Rupel's French valet is a fellow who will do anything for money. He has undertaken to tackle the statesman while he is crossing the Channel."

"That's a good idea," returned Ben Sherman, "but I think that these papers will suggest a better one."

He took the papers from his pocket and handed them to the countess. She read them through, and then said, after some minutes:

"No; these papers will not be of much good. You see, they have been stolen, and if they were produced in a court of law, the question of forgery might arise. It will be better to get rid of him, and that will end the whole matter."

"I see now the value of your advice."

"But I'll tell you how we can use them. We can get Clarence to give us a good round sum of money for them. With these papers in my possession, I can now compel him to marry me."

"Why don't you go for Sir William and marry him?" asked Ben Sherman.

"Because Sir William would not marry me if I should threaten him. If I showed him these papers he would sooner bear exposure than do anything which would connect him with anything underhand. I know the man too well. I can lead Clarence and compel him to do as I say."

"But is Sir William not a forger?"

"Yes, but for all that he could not be made to do anything wrong now. I can well understand the motive which prompted him to do this. He no doubt considered that he was not doing anything wrong. In my mind, I think that he did perfectly right. But these things are neither here nor there. We have agreed to go for the statesman and others, and we must do it!"

"Just as you say, Nell."

The countess and those present gathered around the

table, while Ben commenced to divide the proceeds of that night's work.

"Give me that diamond necklace," demanded the countess. "I will save it until I am Lady Rupel. You see by the inscription that it is very old, and has been worn by all the illustrious women in the family."

After staying some time at the rendezvous, the party separated, and the countess returned to her residence in Saville Row, carrying with her the papers, which she intended to show to Clarence when he called that evening.

Early the next evening, after the reception, Phil Roach presented himself at the countess' residence, and was ushered into a small room off the parlors, where the conference was to take place. His disguise was as complete as the night before, and he had no fear of being discovered by any of those who were to be present. He was well armed, and if any trouble should arise he could protect himself. When he entered the room he found Fred Kissam and Clarence Rupel waiting to receive him. The countess had not come downstairs yet. She was dressing and had sent word that she would see them in a few minutes.

She had not seen Clarence since the night before, and had not had the opportunity to tell him about the papers which were in her possession. After dressing herself she took the papers and placed them in her pocket, and then went downstairs to meet the men who were waiting for her.

Clarence had been drinking heavily all that day. The liquor had made him nervous and excited. The countess' delay had made him mad, and when she entered the room she found him walking up and down and swearing at a furious rate. The detective and Kissam had tried to quiet him, but it was of no use. The more they tried to pacify him the wilder he became, so that when the countess came into the room he turned on her and demanded with an oath:

"Why didn't you come sooner?"

"Because I was dressing," she quickly replied.

"You know that that is a lie."

"Clarence Rupel!"

"It is easy enough for you to say that you were detained because you were dressing. But who was that man that came out of your room a few minutes ago and left the house?"

"No man. I——"

"You know there was a man with you."

"I tell you——"

"There was. You say that you are true to me, but you lie."

"Clarence, you are drunk and don't know what you are saying."

"I am not."

Rupel was furious with rage. The liquor had made him wild and he had no control over his temper.

"I say that you are drunk and that ends it," exclaimed the countess, who was not greatly excited.

"Say that again and I will choke you to death," cried Clarence, as he advanced toward the countess in a threatening manner.

"I will say it again; you are drunk."

Before the detective or Kissam could intercede, Clarence gave one bound forward and clutched the countess by the throat.

The countess had expected that he would do this, and the minute he caught her by the throat she dug her fingernails into his eyes. With a cry of pain and the fury of a madman, he threw her to the floor and then commenced a struggle, which it was impossible for either the detective or Kissam to stop, owing to the fact that both Clarence and the countess were locked in each other's grasp so tight, and were rolling from one end of the room to the other rapidly. The countess' dress was torn from her back. The papers in her pocket fell upon the floor. The experienced eye of the detective saw them, and he picked them up. The struggle continued. Once or twice Roach got hold of the contestants and tried to pull them apart. At last the countess succeeded in loosening Rupel's grasp, and in an instant she jumped to her feet. Rupel's face was streaming with blood. The countess ran toward the door, and Rupel followed, with a dagger in his hand, which at that moment he had drawn from his bosom. Phil Roach darted between him and the woman, and with a powerful stroke he knocked the dagger from the madman's hand. Clarence dodged the detective when he tried to grab him, and then darted toward the countess, who had succeeded in reaching the hall. The noise of the conflict had attracted the attention of the people who were passing, and now there was a large crowd in the hall, including two policemen and a number of reporters. Before any of them could offer any assistance, Clarence pulled a pistol, grabbed the countess by the arm, and fired.

"You have killed me," she cried, and then fell to the floor. The spectators were horrified.

"Stand back!" Clarence Rupel cried, as he made a dash toward the door. The crowd fell back, and he was about to make good his escape, when Phil Roach pounced upon him and threw him down. The murderer was on his feet again in a second. The detective caught him around the waist and threw him again, at the same time trying to put the nippers on his wrists. None of the crowd attempted to offer any assistance. They seemed to be riveted to the spot by the horror of the scene before them. Rupel rolled over on his side, threw Roach from him, and darted toward the door again. The crowd fell back. Just at that moment a man came rushing into the hall from the street. He had a pistol in his hand, and fired it direct at Rupel, who threw up his hands and fell at Ben Sherman's feet.

"So perishes my sister's murderer!" he cried, as he walked quickly up to where the countess was lying, and knelt by her side.

During the struggle, Phil Roach had lost his wig, and the papers had fallen from his pocket. One of the reporters had picked them up, and was now intent upon reading their contents. The detective spied the papers, and walking up to the man, he pulled them from his hand.

"What right have you to read these?" he demanded.

"I saw that there was a sensational inscription on them, and——"

"I know what you would say," broke in the detective.

"Phil Roach!" exclaimed the reporter, as he looked more fully at the detective, and recognized the famous man of Scotland Yard.

Ben Sherman heard the reporter, and looking up, he recognized the man who had hunted him so long. His pistol was still in his hand, and taking aim, he fired. The ball lodged in the detective's side. Notwithstanding the pain, Roach turned around and rushed toward Sherman, whom he determined to capture. So unexpected was the assult, that before Ben Sherman could realize what had happened, Roach had the nippers on him, and exclaimed:

"I arrest you in the queen's name!"

And then he fainted away, owing to the loss of blood.

The police had recovered by this time, and took Sherman in charge. The crowd was put out of the house, and a surgeon sent for to attend to the detective. They took Sherman to Scotland Yard and locked him up to await further results.

(To be continued)

BOX FIFTY-TWO

By ROBERT W. SISE

THIS is the story Sam Merrow of the *World* told me one morning at a quarter of four, as we were walking uptown:

"When Kitty Andrews said she'd marry me, I suppose it made me about the happiest man in the newspaper business," was the way Sam began his story. "You fellows who have always lived with your folks don't know what it means to have been without anything you might call a home, and to have lived around at boarding-houses and cafés since you were a boy, as I have done. It sounds mighty fine to say you're your own master, and accountable to no one, but you get deadly tired of it by the time you're thirty, and you wish to Heaven that there were some one for you to be accountable to; some one who cared whether or not you came home at night, and took some interest in you and what you did. Well, you can imagine how I felt then, when I found out that I, who have no single thing about me to attract a woman, had won the heart of the dearest girl in the world.

"It was two nights after she told me that I was sitting in the office, waiting with the philosophical content of a man on call for something to turn up. I had the last call from seven to three, and ordinarily I should have looked forward with anything but pleasure to such a long pull, for it was a dull evening, and there was not a thing in sight which would be likely to take me out, but that night the time passed quickly and pleasantly, for I could sit there and think of Kitty and wish that I were with her. She had been staying with her sister at North Beach, and was to come up that evening. There was no one to come with her, but it was only a short distance from the boat to a car which would take her home, so I did not worry.

"It was early in the evening, and of course, at that time it was very quiet in the big office. Of all the reporters there was only one other in beside myself, and the four rows of desks shone closed and empty in the bright glare of the electric light. The only sounds which broke the stillness were the muffled conversation in the city editor's room, and the rattle of Pemberton's typewriter as he worked on a story.

"I put my knees against the edge of my desk and leaned back, and dreamed and dreamed of how happy I was going to be with Kitty in the little home I had already begun to picture to myself. I wondered and wondered if it could all be true, and then I recalled how she looked as she put her head on my shoulder and whispered: 'I do love you, Sam.' The longer I sat there and thought, the more contented and happy I felt, until it seemed as though there was nothing on earth left to wish for.

"That was at ten o'clock, but the hour had not more than sounded when there crept over me a most indescribable feeling of terror and dread. There was no reason for it, no possible explanation of it, but it came on me suddenly, and it grew and grew until it seemed as though I should spring out of my chair and scream aloud. It was a premonition—a psychological foreboding of danger. You know I've no more nerves than a graven image, yet there I was with every nerve in my body quivering with fright without any apparent cause. I could not sit still, but got up from my chair and began pacing up and down the office, faster and faster. Then the dread took a more definite form, and I could feel that it was some danger to Kitty that was moving me so; that somewhere, and not very far away, she needed me, and needed me fearfully. I could almost hear her voice calling me for aid, and the longing to go to her, if I had only known how or where, shook me like a reed. What made it worse was that I knew she must be somewhere in the city at that time, but even knowing this I could not tell where to go to her, and I could not bring myself to leave my post on a mere impulse, no matter how strong it was.

"I paced up and down, up and down, getting more nervous and excited, when all of a sudden the fire alarm tapper over the door of the city editor's room began to strike, and from the first tap of the bell it sounded like a summons to me. We didn't ordinarily answer a first alarm, and yet I could feel that I should answer this one, and that it was more to me than a mere fire alarm; that it was something of vivid personal import, though what I could not tell.

"I stood in the center of the floor, counting the strokes of the tapper with every nerve on the quiver. One—two—three—four—five—rang out the little bell. Then a pause; and again: one—two. I did not wait for instructions, but reached my locker in a couple of jumps. The city editor put his head out of his door, and seeing that I was going, simply nodded.

"'Get a gait, Merrow,' he said, but I did not need to be told that. Fifty-two was our scare box. We never waited for a second alarm from there, but jumped the moment it was rung in. It was right in the heart of the dry goods district, where the big buildings, full of inflammable material, gave the finest chance for a fire. It sounded especially scary at night, when there was no one around down in that part of the city, and a fire would have a fine chance to get a good start before it was discovered.

"I knew all this well enough, but this and more would not explain the way I ran to that fire. Although it was a sharp night, I did not wait to take my overcoat, but cramming my hat on my head, went flying down the stairs, taking all sorts of chances of sprained ankles, and tore up the street like a wild creature. It was half-past ten, and there were not many people on the sidewalk, but I could not wait to pick my way through them, and ran up the middle of the street as I had not run for years. I could feel that the fire itself had no connection with the way I was running, nor with the alarm, and that something more to me than life itself hung in the balance, though what, I could not tell. I slipped and stumbled on the pavement; I strained and struggled, and my breath came in great gasps and sobs, and still I could not go fast enough.

"I've answered that box a dozen times and I've never thought of going any other way than down Canal street. I knew that was the quickest way, but in spite of the desperate haste that was dragging me on, I gave that way no thought, but kept straight on up Main street, to

East. I did not pause, for my way seemed as clear as though some one ran before me, beckoning me on. Down East street I turned, and here I was all alone, and my footsteps echoed loudly back from the deserted buildings as I ran. Far down the street I could see something coming, and coming fast, and as I saw it an overpowering fear took possession of me, and I knew that I must meet it before something, what, I could not tell, happened.

"Then in an instant I saw what it was; a great truck, probably that of some belated teamster coming from the ferries, but now without a driver, with the reins on the horses' backs and the horses themselves tearing wildly up the street, with the vehicle bounding and thundering behind them.

"And then, only a short distance ahead of the oncoming outfit, I saw some one crossing the street, and my heart leaped up in my throat as I recognized the trim little figure I knew so well. In a second I saw her stop, hesitate, turn back, trip on something in the street, and go down directly in the path of the maddened animals.

"I gave a great sob of terror, and bent forward, striving to run faster as the realization of what it all meant came over me, but it was like running in a nightmare; my feet were as though anchored to the ground and I seemed hardly to move. I paid no attention to the truck; my whole life and soul were in reaching that little heap on the ground before it, and I felt that if I could not do that it was better that I, too, should go under the oncoming hoofs.

The horses were almost on me when I stooped, and, hardly pausing, lifted her in my arms.

"It was all over in a second, although it seemed years, so keen was my agony. The horses were almost on me when I stooped, and, hardly pausing in my run, lifted her in my arms. I made a bound to one side, but as I did so the shoulder of the off horse struck mine, and I was whirled around and dashed to the ground, stunned and bewildered, but holding Kitty safe in my arms, while the team went thundering by almost above us.

"I was on my feet in an instant and lifted her from the ground. I leaned against the building, holding her close to me, and shaking from head to foot, while my teeth chattered as if with ague. My whole being had been so racked and torn by the fearful strain I had gone through that I was nearly out of my head, and I shivered and cried and laughed, as I tried to tell her in wildly disconnected sentences, how I happened to be there, and how thankful I was, and how I loved her.

"And she, brave little woman, only cried a little on my shoulder, and then was as calm and sweet as ever, and tried to soothe and steady me, who, strong man that I was, was far more frightened and unstrung than she appeared to be.

"Soon I became calmer, and as soon as I could think at all, I felt an overpowering thankfulness for our escape—thankfulness even that the thing had happened; for in those few awful moments before I had picked her from the ground, I had realized, as I could never have realized otherwise, what she was to me. For I knew then that if I could not have reached her in time there would have been nothing in life for me, and that I should not have tried to escape the death which was to be hers.

"She gathered from my disconnected talk that I was on duty at a fire, and she would not hear of my leaving my post to go with her. It was only a few steps to her car, and so in a few moments I was alone again and she was on her way home. Only before she got on the car she put her hand in mine and looked up into my eyes.

"'Don't imagine that I'm not thankful, dear,' she said, 'nor that I don't feel what you've done. I can't tell you now—here.'

"I started back for the office, and then remembered what I was there for, and ran for the box again. I reached it in a few minutes, but to my surprise everything was dark, and there was a policeman leaning up against it.

"'What was that alarm for?' I gasped, all out of breath.

"'What alarm?' said he, looking at me disdainfully.

"'The alarm that was rung in from this box a little while ago.'

"'There ain't been no alarm rung in from this box,' said he.

"I looked at him in a dazed sort of way. 'I know better,' I said. 'I've just come from the *World* office, and it was rung in there not fifteen minutes ago.'

"'Well, young feller,' he said, turning away, 'I guess you'd better go back to the *World* office and get your breath. There ain't been no alarm rung in from this box to-night. I've been standin' here for an hour.'

"That was all I could get out of him. It didn't seem so strange to me then, for my mind was still in a whirl from the fright I had had, and I think nothing would have

surprised me much, so after he'd gone I wandered around trying to locate the fire, and finding nothing, gave it up and went back to the office. I went in and stood by the city editor's desk without speaking. In a minute he looked up.

"'Well,' he said, 'how was the fire?'

"'It didn't amount to anything,' I answered. 'What box did you make it?'

"'What box? Why, fifty-two, of course. Why do you ask?'

"'Oh, nothing,' I answered; 'I thought perhaps I might have made a mistake.'

"Then I went out into the local room, and as soon as I got inside the door Pemberton called across to me.

"'How was box fifty-two?' he said.

"'Then you made it fifty-two, did you?' I asked.

"'Sure,' said he, 'didn't you?'

"By this time I had pretty well gotten over my fright, and was able to think clearly again, and I couldn't understand it at all. It was perfectly certain that that alarm had been rung in our office; we had all three heard it; but it was also perfectly certain that it had not been rung from the box, and how else could the tapper have sounded in the office? There was something ghostly and creepy about the whole thing that gave me a queer feeling. I puzzled over the matter for a long while before I went to sleep that night, and I've puzzled over it much since then, but I've never come across a logical explanation of it. The only thing that ever looked like a solution was something that happened next day. I was in the office again in the afternoon, and saw a couple of the telegraph company's men coming down from the roof, where they'd been fixing wires. I thought I might get some clue from them, and when I asked them what they'd been working on I found that one of the company's wires had fallen in the night, and dropped across our fire alarm wires. I told the lineman about the alarm ringing in, and asked him if his wire could have had anything to do with it. He looked at me quizzically, with one eye shut.

"'Well,' he said slowly, 'she grounded on a trolley wire on Belden street for a few minutes, and if she'd happened to take just the right charge there at just the right time, and if she'd happened to strike your wires at a place where the insulation was broken, and if the wind had bounced her about just right she might possibly have rung the tapper in some kind of fashion, but the chances of her having rung in a good clear alarm would have been,' he said speculatively, 'about one in a hundred thousand.'

"When I told Kitty about how I'd been called to her, just when she needed me so desperately, she was deeply touched.

"'Don't let's wonder about it, dear, or try to find out what it means,' she said slowly and thoughtfully, laying her cheek against mine. 'There are some things which we can't understand, and which it's not meant that we should understand. It was something more powerful and mysterious than electricity that called you to me, dear, so let's leave it that way and take it as a sign that you were meant to watch over me, and that you'll always be near when I want you.'"

FREAK CISTERNS

THE baobab tree, Adansonia digitata, a member of the hollyhock family, common in the Sudan, is one of the freaks of the vegetable world. It has a large bottle-shaped trunk which, though scarcely reaching the height of sixty feet, is often more than a hundred feet in circumference and is therefore one of the largest of plants. The stubby branches which spring mostly from the top of the stem, are so broad that the natives can sleep on them. The other trees may decay and form large cavities in which rain-water accumulates. Acting on this hint of nature, the *American Botanist* says the natives of Kordofan have hollowed out the trunks of many specimens and in rainy seasons fill them with water for use when the rains cease. A hole is often bored near the base by means of which the water is drawn off as wanted.

In a recent Kew bulletin an officer in the Darfur campaign says that in Kordofan they have no water for hundreds of miles and the natives live in the dry season on water stored in hollow trees called tebaldis. They are ugly, bottle-shaped trees, all trunk, from six to twenty feet thick, and a good one holds 1,000 gallons. Each family owns certain trees and each tree has its own name. The natives scrape a small hole at the base of the tree and after a rain everybody turns out to fill tebaldi trees. A man stands at the top of the hole, about twenty feet up, hauls up the water in a skin bucket and pours it into the tree. It keeps sweet and is better than well water.

The fruits of the baobab are oval, brownish green, about the size of a cucumber and contain an edible pulp of which the monkeys are very fond. From this fact the trees are sometimes called the monkey bread tree.

LOOKING FOR BURIED POT OF GOLD

FOR past generations tradition has decreed that the Indians in the old days of Kentucky buried a pot of gold on the farm of John Williams, over the Boyle line in Casey County. A few days ago Mr. Williams decided to start a systematic search for the treasure. His powerful team of mules he hitched to a strong plow, and in the locality where the gold is supposed to be hidden he began going into the earth. It has always been claimed that the pot is of gigantic proportions. After considerable deep plowing had been done and numerous excavations made, Mr. Williams' mules came to a sudden standstill when the plow struck an object that could not be moved.

So, certain he had found the traditional pot, he was overjoyed, and fainted. Passersby hurried to his assistance, and he was revived and told those present what he was seeking. An excavation was made and it was proved the plow had struck a huge rock. However, the search is being continued.

There are a number of farms in Boyle County upon which it is claimed large quantities of silver and gold are buried, relates the Philadelphia *Inquirer*. In most cases, it is believed to have been hidden by misers or frightened people during war times. Not a few people have lost their lives by keeping their money in their homes, and attempting to hold it against the intrusion of robbers. That was one reason treasures were buried in other days.

In this enlightened age, with burglar-proof banking facilities, people are not subject to these dangers. Some years ago some parties near Paint Lick in Garrard County in wrecking an old house found several thousand dollars which had been hidden during war times. The man who had hidden the money died without telling the secret.

MISS GRESHAM'S ENGAGEMENTS

By ELIZABETH HARMAN

KITTY GRESHAM had broken her engagement with Charlie Earl, and Charlie was very unhappy. He went about looking melancholy, he smoked dozens of cigarettes, he took many more drinks than he was in the habit of taking, and he rode his beautiful bay hunter Highflier miles and miles every day; but nothing diverted his mind from the fact that he had been thrown over by the girl he loved.

Charlie was attractive-looking, very slender, not very tall, with fair hair and a long, fair, twisted mustache. All his life he had found his chief joy among his horses and his polo ponies, and Highflier was the jewel of his stables. Until he met Kitty, he never had thought it possible that anything could take precedence of Highflier in his heart.

Kitty had taken precedence in a number of hearts. She was clothed about, as it were, with a garment with that intangible quality or gift called style. If she had put on rags and tatters, they would have at once assumed an air and a grace, but as her papa was amply blessed with this world's goods, she was not called upon to display her magic, and instead, glorified the pretty things that clever people on both sides of the world contrived for her.

In addition to being stylish, Kitty was pretty, with quantities of soft, dark hair, blue eyes and singularly brilliant teeth.

"Don't talk to me about Charlie Earl! I hate him!" she said to her most intimate friend, who had essayed to probe her heart the day after the engagement was broken, and the way she rushed into everything that came up for the next three weeks and flirted with every man who came near her and allowed Harry Gibson, who had been in love with her for a year, to devote himself to her, should have convinced the most skeptical that she cared absolutely nothing for her ex-fiancé.

Then the races at the Hunt Club came off. Every one went in her best bib and tucker, and Kitty, of course, was there. She came driving in to the club grounds in her phaeton, dressed all in black—dainty, chiffony, Frenchy black—with a big feathered picture hat on her graceful head. Beside her was Harry Gibson, looking ineffably happy.

Charlie Earl was to ride in two of the races—one for ponies, one for hunters—and he was resplendent in his pink coat, with a little cap to match, tight white trousers and black boots.

Kitty bowed to him with elaborate indifference as he rode past on his pony, Dart, to the first race, and she smiled in scornful amusement at his jealous glare at Gibson. She looked on with a slightly bored expression while the race was being run, and when Charlie came in far ahead of the other racers.

"Charlie does ride well!" exclaimed Gibson in generous admiration.

"Oh, he is rather a good horseman," said Kitty. "What a sweet pony your Kitty is, Mr. Gibson. Why didn't you ride her in the race?"

"Oh, I'm not much to look at on a horse," said Gibson, "and I don't like to make myself ridiculous in somebody's eyes."

"Whose? Won't you tell me?" said Kitty with a languishing glance.

"Oh, you know, Kitty!" said Gibson.

"Indeed I don't," protested Kitty.

"In the eyes of the only girl in all the world I have ever loved," said Gibson, forgetting the little actress and the seven or eight sisters of seven or eight of his friends and the two or three married women to whom he had made the same statement.

"And what is her name?" said Kitty demurely.

"Yours!" said Gibson.

"Oh!" said Kitty, casting down her eyes and trying to blush.

"You won't refuse me?" said Gibson, his round, blond face red with nervousness and anxiety.

"No," said Kitty so low that he could scarcely hear her, her head still bent.

Gibson began to pour forth his rapture in adjectives and exclamation-points.

Then the race for hunters began.

"And we're engaged, aren't we, Kitty?" said Gibson, ecstatically.

"Yes," Kitty admitted.

"And may I tell?"

"As soon as you like."

"And you love me?"

"Why else should I marry you?" said Kitty with a glance that tried to be arch, and then her eyes returned to the flying figures in the race and followed the two in the lead—Charlie Earl on Highflier and Dicky Tremont on his big gray mare Swallow.

Swallow was ahead at the first and second hurdles, but at the third Highflier was gaining on her and they rose to it almost simultaneously. Swallow's hind legs caught on the top bar and down she came with a thud and a crash, knocking against Highflier's front legs and bringing him down beside her. Dicky was tumbled head-over-heels, but jumped up almost instantly. Charlie was thrown ahead as straight as an arrow, and fell full length on the track and did not move.

Kitty's hands clenched tight over the reins for a second; then, with a loud shriek, she gathered up her skirts and leaped to the ground. She ran to the place where Charlie lay, forced her way through the crowd that surrounded him, fell on her knees beside him and began dabbing helplessly at his face with her handkerchief, while her tears fell on him.

"Charlie, Charlie! Oh, Charlie!" she wailed, regardless of the staring faces, regardless of everything save that the man she had sworn she hated was apparently dying, or dead.

Charlie slowly opened his eyes.

"Do you—take—it—back?" he said feebly.

"Yes, oh, yes!" said Kitty. "I never meant it! I loved you all the time."

Charlie sat up with astounding alacrity.

"I wasn't much hurt," he said. "My breath was knocked out of me, but I thought that would get you. Oh, Kitty, you darling!"

He caught her hands and laughed with joyous impudence right in her face, and she laughed with him, while Gibson swore roundly under his breath.

CURRENT NEWS

PLANT TURNS LAKE RED

The waters of Huffman Lake, Ind., reported to be changing to a brown or reddish color, is not turning to blood, as some of the superstitious believed. Dr. Will Scott, of the biology department of Indiana University, has investigated the conditions and reports he found large quantities of an "algae poison," which comes from a plant growth flourishing in the lake.

BONES IN INDIAN MOUND

Human bones, so old that they crumbled at the touch of a spade, were unearthed in an Indian mound five miles from Edwardsville, Ill., by Hugh Pong, whose farm includes five mounds. The bones crumbled when they were exposed to the air, and it was impossible to distinguish the shapes of any except some skulls and arm and leg bones. The bones were piled in a heap, and for that reason it probably will be impossible to excavate any complete skeletons.

CAT RODE FLYWHEEL

Tom, the big cat pet of the woodsmen in a mill at Sheboygan, Wis., had a most unusual joy ride and escaped with his life, or one of them.

The big cat attempted to leap through a sixteen-foot flywheel while it was making seventy-one revolutions per minute, but was caught in the wheel and held for twenty minutes, when the engine was stopped.

During the ride the cat traveled 68,160 feet, or twelve and three-fourths miles. He was picked up as dead, but one hour later ate a heavy meal.

A CHILD WONDER

Denzel Ruth Newberry, a four-year-old girl of Sterling, Ill., is able to repeat forty-eight recitations and songs, among the number being "Curfew Shall Not Ring Tonight," and "Hail Columbia," the total number of words to the forty-eight pieces being thirty-four hundred and fifty. She began learning short poems about a year ago, and when a poem is learned she does not forget it. When reciting she begins with the first poem that she learned, and recites the total of forty-eight poems without being prompted, taking about seventy-five minutes to recite them all.

JAPAN'S NEW WAR VESSELS

According to a Japanese navy officer recently in Washington, says the New York *Times*, the new battleship *Nagato*, now under construction in the naval dock at Kure, Japan, will be the largest war vessel yet undertaken by that country. She will displace 32,000 tons, and while similar in many respects to the *Ise*, under construction at Kobe, is expected to embody several important improvements and to develop more speed than the twenty-two knots credited to the latter vessel. Japan has five dreadnoughts in commission or building, and four battle cruisers. Two additional ships of the battle cruiser class are to be completed by 1923.

A MEDICAL SOCIETY'S GREAT HELP

Dependents of soldiers and sailors serving in the United States during the war will be given free medical attendance and advice by members of the North Texas Medical Society, according to a resolution introduced by Dr. Manton M. Carrick, of Dallas, and adopted by the society in convention at Fort Worth, Tex., according to a recent issue of the Fort Worth *Record*. The resolution was adopted without a dissenting vote. In offering the resolution Dr. Carrick said: "We shall not ask physicians to treat dependents of men who are able to pay, but I do not feel that such help is charity; rather a privilege to the medical profession to volunteer in the same spirit that these men have volunteered."

TO SAVE WASTE GAS

Representatives of boards of trade and similar organizations in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania were urged by Gov. Brumbaugh recently to work for conservation of life and natural resources.

The primary purpose of the meeting was to obtain ideas to use the waste gases of the hard coal mines. The Governor declared:

"If we can harness this power we can change the complexion of your industrial life, ship coal and receive more money."

The Governor said that nearly 72,000,000 cubic feet of gas, or 148,000,000 horse-power, is lost every twenty-four hours in the anthracite field.

MONEY IN SKUNK TRAPPING

Whether or not it is the war that has affected the price of skunk hides, Joseph Moore of Brookville, Kan., does not know, but he knows that the business of trapping skunks this year is much more profitable than in former years, and he has gone into the business on a large scale.

Since November 1 Mr. Moore has trapped 106 skunks and their hides are now nailed up on the side of his barn, near Brookville. Mr. Moore says there are 106 of them, but no one else has taken enough interest to count them. The hides are worth from 50 cents to $7 each, and Mr. Moore says his month's work will net him at least $100.

DREAM TOLD MOTHER OF HER SON'S DEATH

Charles Frehardt, an employee of the C. H. Reynolds & Sons Coal Company, was standing near one of the concern's coal pockets, Morgan avenue and Meserole street, Williamsburg, N. Y., the other day watching persons fighting for admittance to the coal yards when he lost his balance and fell into the pocket. Two carloads of coal were dumped on him. It took a large force of men to shovel away coal before his body was recovered. When Patrolman Redmond, of the Stagg street station went to the Frehardt home he met the aged mother.

"I know why you are calling on me," she said. "I just had a dream in which I saw him killed."

REDMAN GROWS RICH

The recent heavy contributions made by the Indians to the Second Liberty Loan has drawn attention to the large sums held by Uncle Sam for his Indian wards. There are several thousand Indian bank depositors in the United States, with total deposits of more than $18,000,000. Something in excess of $4,000,000 is on deposit for various tribes. The combined sum is held by 725 banks, scattered through thirteen States. And the increase for last year alone amounted to $2,000,000.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs in Washington has supervision over all this business, and it is the proud claim of the bureau that no red man has lost a single dollar of the money handled for him.

CAN OF MONEY FOUND

Three small boys, whose aggregate age is twenty years, playing near San Francisco's new City and County Hospital, unearthed the "end of the rainbow" in the tangible form of a tomato can stuffed with real money.

Five thousand dollars in $5 notes—Federal Reserve bills of the issue of 1914—the boys pulled forth and then began an onslaught upon neighboring candy stores. They did not count the money, but exchanged sheafs of the bills for bags of candy.

In all they passed out $3,000 for fifty cents' worth of sweets before they were observed by a police officer, who took the remaining $2,000 in charge.

In the opinion of the police the money was buried by a thief. The money will be returned to the boys if it is not claimed and identified.

BIGGEST OLIVE GROVE

Although the olive is the oldest known fruit and Los Angeles County, California, is among the youngest horticultural districts in the world, it is here that is found the largest olive grove in existence. The grove embraces 1,500 acres and every inch of the land is within the city of Los Angeles. The grove is in the San Fernando district and became a part of the city when the San Fernando Valley obtained water for irrigation from the Los Angeles aqueduct, which brings pure mountain water 250 miles to the city. One provision made in building the aqueduct was that it should supply only persons and institutions within the city limits. This condition has led to the annexation of various outlying territories until the city now covers an area of 337.92 square miles, making it the largest in point of area in the United States.

CHEMICAL GROWTHS RESEMBLE FOLIAGE.

A 10 per cent. solution of sodium silicate (water glass) is put into a glass or beaker, and crystals of any or all of the following salts are dropped in: copper sulphate, ferrous sulphate, nickel sulphate, cobalt nitrate. Many other salts will give similar results, but the various sulphates appear to be the best, writes Jerome S. Marcus in the *Electrical Experimenter*.

Shortly after the crystals are placed in the solution, they will begin to grow in fantastic shapes, each of the salts giving a different growth of different color. These growths look so much like under-sea foliage that they have often been called "submarine gardens."

The rate of growth depends on the strength of the silicate solution, as the crystals are due to a formation of the silicate of the salt used. A solution of the strength mentioned above allows the crystals to grow in a more even manner at a rate which can be watched. The growths, however, will not keep unless the solution is very weak, and then they grow too slowly.

FORGOT HIS PAST LIFE

After being given up as dead thirteen years, Milton Simmons, of Kokomo, Ind., real estate dealer, has returned to his mother, Mrs. Cecelia Simmons, at Syracuse, N. Y.

Simmons tells a remarkable story of his loss of memory resulting from the Iroquois fire in Chicago. He was operating a spotlight in the balcony when the fire broke out and he was plunged sixty feet onto the bodies below, but was rescued. The fall caused loss of memory, and after two months in a hospital he recovered, going to Tipton, Ind., where he engaged in business and married. Later he went into the real estate business in Kokomo, where he now resides.

Increasing pressure on the brain from the injury resulted in the necessity for an operation last winter, and following this he gradually regained memory of his mother and his former life.

NEWEST THINGS IN SCIENCE

A Chicago woman has patented a shoe with an electric battery in the heel to supply a mild current to a wearer's ankle as a tonic.

Duplex automobile springs have been invented by a Californian, an auxiliary spring coming into action if the main one breaks or is overloaded.

The inventor of a new electric brake for automobiles claims it will stop a car moving at a speed of fifty miles an hour within forty-five feet without skidding.

The State Government has bought several large brown coal fields in the vicinity of Leipzig with a view to the electrification of its railroads.

Among the anti-skidding devices for automobiles is one employing two pronged bars mounted near the rear wheels of a car and so operated by a lever by the driver that they are lowered against the tires when the lateral motion begins.

ALASKA'S MINES YIELDED MORE THAN $41,000,000 IN 1917

In 1917 Alaska produced minerals valued at $41,760,000. These are the advance figures issued by the United States Geological Survey, Department of the Interior, and are based on estimates made by G. C. Martin. The value of the mineral output of Alaska in 1917, although about $6,870,000 less than that in 1916, was greater than that in any other year. The most valuable mineral product in 1917 was copper, of which 88,200,000 pounds, valued at $24,000,000, was produced. This is less than the output of 1916, which was 119,600,000 pounds, valued at $29,480,000, but is greater than that of any other year. The reduction is due largely to labor troubles and is not necessarily permanent. The gold produced in 1917, $15,450,000, of which $9,850,000 was derived from placer mines, was also less than that produced in 1916, which was $17,240,000, and is the smallest since 1904. The reduction was due chiefly to curtailment of operations because of the scarcity of labor and the high cost of materials, but in part to the disaster at the Treadwell mine and the depletion of some of the richer placers.

During the year Alaska also produced silver valued at $1,050,000, coal valued at $300,000, lead valued at $160,000, tin valued at $160,000, antimony valued at $40,000, and tungsten, chromium, petroleum, marble, gypsum, graphite, and platinum valued at $600,000.

During 33 years of mining Alaska has produced more than $391,000,000 in gold, silver, copper, and other minerals. Of this amount $293,000,000 represents the value of the gold and $88,200,000 that of the copper.

ARTIFICIAL EYES OF CARTILAGE

A surgeon of the British army is experimenting with balls of cartilage for artificial eyes. When live cartilage is transplanted to the eye socket it establishes connections with blood vessels and surrounding tissues, and before long moves naturally in co-ordination with its fellow. To what extent the cartilage can be colored so as to simulate a real eye is yet to be proved, but it can at least be faced with a shell of celluloid that will appear natural.

A BLIND MAN COULD THREAD THIS NEEDLE

No matter how good your eyes are, there is always a certain amount of eye strain in threading a needle, says the *Popular Science Monthly*. If your vision is not as sharp as it once was, it is even something of a task to get a piece of thread through a needle's eye.

A needle has been devised which can be threaded by the simple expedient of looping the thread over the head of the needle and drawing it downward. The needle differs from the ordinary needle in that it has an opening through the top of the eye through which the thread slips when it is drawn downward. The steel ends spring close together as soon as the thread has passed into the eye.

This type of needle is said to be particularly adapted to the doing of fancy work because two or three threads may be passed through the eye at one time, a feat that is quite impossible with the ordinary needle. It is also useful for embroidering with worsted, the thick, clumsy threads of which make it necessary, usually, to employ a needle for the purpose which has a large, clumsy eye.

AUSTRALIAN FORESTS

The striking characteristics of the Australian forests is their total unlikeness to the forests of other temperate regions. The great forests of timber trees are not damp and shaded and all of one species, but are well lighted and filled with other forests of shorter trees. In places the woods consist of large, widely spaced trees, surrounded by nothing higher than bunch grass.

The tulip, lily, honeysuckle and fern, writes a contributor to the *National Geographic Magazine*, take on surprising aspects. They are not garden flowers, but trees, and the landscape of which they form a part resembles that of a period millions of years ago.

The trees are really those of a past age. In America and Europe the shadowy forms of fossil leaves of strange plant species are gathered and studied with interest, but in Australia many of them are still living. The impression that you are looking upon a landscape that has forever disappeared from other parts of the world is so vivid that the elms and maples and oaks that are planted in some of the city streets strike a jarring note. The change from ancient to modern times is startlingly abrupt.

MOUSE PROVES A GOOD ENGINEER

"We had dug holes for the poles of our new transmission line extending between the power-house and a new pumping plant. A field mouse trotting around tumbled into one of them and was imprisoned during the night. Making my usual morning inspection of the work, I noticed the little fellow running around the bottom of the hole trying to find some means of escape," writes Louis B. Lawrence in *Popular Mechanics*. "When I came back from my tour he had settled down to business. He was digging steadily a spiral groove around and around the inner surface of the hole with a uniformly ascending grade.

"At the end of two weeks the little engineer struck a rock too big for him to move. For nearly a day he tried to get around it, but without success. Then, with wonderful patience and unflinching courage, he dug another pocket, reversed his spiral, and went on tunneling his way in the opposite direction. At the end of three weeks he was coming near the top. Morning came: the mouse had sped away, his spiral road completed."

LIZARDS SQUIRT BLOOD

We have about fourteen species of horned lizards in this country, and most people still call them "horned toads." Some of their habits are extremely remarkable, but none more so than their ability to send at will a fine jet of blood from either eye. This fact is very rarely touched upon in literature, and the average reader of the life histories of our animals has never heard of this remarkable habit, says a writer in the *Popular Science Monthly* for December, in an article entitled "A Lizard That Squirts Jets of Blood From Its Eyes."

Blood-squirting is generally indulged in when the lizard is laboring under certain states of excitement. The attack comes on suddenly, at a time when you have the lizard in your grasp. It will suddenly stiffen its neck and throw the head upward, as the eyes bulge from their sockets. In another second you can plainly hear a peculiar hissing sound, followed immediately by the finest imaginable jet of pure blood from one or the other of its eyes. With such force is this squirted that the tiny stream, lasting a couple of seconds, may be thrown to a distance of fully 5 feet.

A WHIMSICAL CIRCUMSTANCE

In consequence of some alterations made in St. Giles' church-yard several large, flat tombstones became superfluous articles, since the persons over whom they had been placed had sunk into the narrow house at so distant a period that no friend lived to insist on the dead retaining the little privilege of that sculptured *hic jacet* which duty or affection had construed to their memory. It happened that the churchwarden for the time being was a baker, and he looked with a longing eye on these nice flat, polished stones, for his oven wanted fresh bottoming. Whether he went into church or came out of church he never passed the flat, polished stones but he thought of the bottom of his oven. In a bold hour he winked at parochial duty, removed the tablets, and gratified his heart by placing them in that fiery place which he thought sacred from every eye except his own.

But the stones, though very nicely polished by the wear of years, yet retained some marks of their former destination, and these cherished traces they very naturally imparted to the bottom crust of the baker's bread.

The novel impress was first discovered by an elderly lady in the faintly marked outlines of a death's head and crossed bones. Her terror at what she conceived so appalling an omen may be readily imagined, but she was too much shocked to communicate her portentous discovery.

A loaf of the same batch was calculated for more general examination, for the word "resurgam" stood imprinted on it, in though large, not bold, letters; the amazed purchaser necessarily forebore to touch a morsel of that bread, which seemed to hint at the possibility of its not sitting quietly on his stomach and showed his purchase, with trepidation, to an ingenious neighbor. This intelligent person conceived it to be a piece of waggery in the baker, who took that covert way of expressing his wish that the article in which he dealt might rise in price. He mentioned it as such to all the parish, but the general inquiry that took place speedily led to a detection of the discreditable fact.

FIRST SIGNBOARDS HUNG AT TAVERNS

The first tradesman to adopt the use of signs were the innkeepers, and from earliest times in England and on the continent the taverns of town and country were distinguished by signboards bearing the names of the hostelries. It was not until the sixteenth century that merchants dealing in other than liquid refreshments began to erect signs over their doors. Once started, the custom spread rapidly and the seventeenth century was a period of greatest prosperity for the sign painters of England.

Even in London the houses and shops were not numbered, so a tradesman's place of business could only be known by a sign. A man starting in business considered a striking sign his most important investment. Huge signs were slung across the entire street. As they grew old they sometimes fell, and thus became a source of great danger. Such signs were prohibited by Parliament in 1762, and after that merchants had to be content with more modest signboards.

MOTOR TRUCK THAT RUNS ON RAILS

Motor trucks that can run on ordinary roads and on railroads are an idea set forth by the *Railroad Man's Magazine* as the solution of the problem of getting the produce of the farm direct to the markets.

"Already experiments have been made, and the plan has been shown to be entirely practical," says the writer. "A motor truck can be constructed that will run on the ground and on the rail with equal facility.

"The wheels will have the steel rim and flange, resembling the modern car wheel, and in addition they will have a higher part like the ordinary solid rubber truck tire, that will run on the ground and enable the truck to reach the farm or ranch and reload with vegetables or hay or grain or what not. Thus it is written, and thus it will be fulfilled.

"This may even be a partial solution of the food problem. A truck gets its load of produce at a farm, drives to the nearest railroad crossing, mounts the rails and speeds at twenty miles per hour toward its destination."

This was actually done by our army in Mexico in 1916.

NAPHTHA JAGS FOR AIRPLANE BUILDERS

At the request of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, Dr. Alice Hamilton of Chicago made an investigation of airplane factories in an effort to form an estimate of the danger of our workmen contracting the "toxic jaundice" that has attracted so much attention in England and Germany. This disease is due to inhaling fumes of the tetrachlorethane used in the dope, or varnish, with which the planes are coated. She reports that in this country we need not dread the disease, for we are not using tetraclorethane to any extent. Instead we are using principally a dope made from cellulose acetate dissolved in acetone, alcohol and benzine, or the acetone may be replaced by a mixture of methyl alcohol, methyl acetate and acetone.

Benzine and methyl alcohol are industrial poisons of distinct danger. The former causes the so-called "naphtha jag," which is disagreeable but not serious. Amyl acetate is said to cause dizziness, drowsiness and other symptoms, but Dr. Hamilton could find little evidence of its danger. Methyl alcohol's worst effect is upon the eyes.

"We ought to insist," writes Dr. Hamilton, "on abundant ventilation for our doping rooms, as the English do." She also suggests regular medical examination of all dopers.

HAS OLD GOLD PIECE

Recently B. B. Gray, of Pinebloom, was in Macon, O., and brought a ten-dollar gold piece which bore the date of 1797. This gold piece was of unusual shape, being the size of a half-dollar, and about as thick as a silver quarter. On one side it had the word "Liberty" over a bust, the face of which resembled that of Queen Victoria. It also had sixteen stars.

On the reverse side there was the usual spread eagle and shield with the words "E Pluribus Unum" and thirteen stars, with the words "United States of America." The number of dollars this gold piece represented were not indicated anywhere on it.

Mr. Gray said that it was given to him a good many years ago by a friend in New York, who had two of them. The statement was made by the donor that there were only about twelve or thirteen of these gold pieces issued when it was discovered that they did not indicate the value, the ten dollars having been omitted. Upon the discovery of the omission the Government attempted to recall the gold pieces, but they were such oddities that they were very highly treasured by the holders.

Mr. Gray states that it is his information that $140 was offered for each one that could be recovered. He says he thinks that inasmuch as that was the price before the day of automobiles, that the freak gold piece ought at least be worth the price of a flivver now, and stands ready to make such a swap.

WONDERS OF ASTRONOMY

Behind and far beyond the planet Mars are the asteroids, 500 of which have been discovered and named by the astronomers. These are nothing more than baby worlds, and new asteroids are being constantly discovered. Chief among them are Ceres, Pallas, Juno and Vesta, ranging from 470 miles diameter in the case of Ceres to 120 miles in the case of Juno. The others shrink in size to twenty miles or less. There may be thousands, myraids of asteroids so small that they cannot be seen even with the most powerful telescopes. Eros, nearest of the asteroids to the sun, is just 135,000,000 miles removed from that body, and Thule, farthest away, is 400,000,000 miles distant. This compares to the 93,000,000 miles that separate our own earth from the solar body.

The asteroid Eros, in contradiction to all of its neighbors, at one period of the year is nearer to the sun than Mars. In other words, its orbit is partly around that planet. And in the course of traversing this orbit it comes relatively close to our own earth. It then approaches nearer than any other planetary body ever ge's, excepting the moon and an occasional comet. At times this distance has been cut down to only 14,000,000 miles —almost near enough to shake hands.

Eros is from twenty to twenty-five miles in diameter and a most interesting infant. It is believed that this and all of the other asteroids may be fractions of a large planet which exploded. The supporters of this theory would place such a lost world between Mars and Jupiter, and say that the explosion may have taken place millions of years ago. In any event, we have a multitude of asteroids, each revolving within a certain orbit, many of which interlace and all going around in a giddy whirl. It is possible that some of them are not circular, but have an irregular shape, as indicated by the varying light upon their surface. And it is scarcely possible that any of them is inhabited, because they have not the mixture of gases which we will call atmosphere, making it possible to breathe and live.

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